

InterMixx Webzine

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Online Edition



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down on
Miller's Farm!

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Page One Profile: Miller's Farm

by Noel Ramos

I interviewed Bryan Miller, long time InterMixx member and founder of Miller's Farm, the band that plays a rather unique style of "country music for city folk."

How did Miller's Farm get started?

The band started as my solo project in 1997 when I quit my full time job and decided to hit music as hard as I could. Pretty quickly I felt the desire to have a band behind me again and I brought in a drummer and a bassist that I'd worked with before in other bands. As we went along, we brought in the soloists (guitar and pedal steel/dobro/harmonica). The sound of the pedal steel/dobro/harmonica really helped focus the direction of the band into the Americana genre, where we are now.

As the principal songwriter, what are your inspirations?

I've been inspired by a wide range of singers. Robert Plant, Mel Tormé, Jon Anderson, Ray Charles, Paul King (of King)... later, Eddie Vedder, Kurt Cobain. The singers who can not only hit the notes, but can make the song their own. Lyle Lovett has been my most recent and biggest inspiration. From the first time I saw him on Dave Letterman singing "She's No Lady", I have aspired to write like him. Simple melodies, seemingly simple songs full of great description, often humorous with a real sense of honesty. Since then, I've gotten turned on to George Jones, Buck Owens and Hank Thompson, who have some similar qualities.

What led you to begin writing "country music for city folk?"

Before Miller's Farm, my writing experience was in an 8 piece party band, writing lyrics for music that was already written. It was a lot of fun, but I found that the songs contained little or no meaning behind them because I was fitting words into a box. I wanted to work the other way around this time, words first, music later. I found that when I write words first, I wind up writing narratives, and they're based on my experiences in the city. As I began to write the music for these stories, somehow the melodies and chord progressions leaned toward the country side of things. At first, much more on the traditional side of country though and later, new country. As I wrote, I started getting all this advice suggesting I should categorize my music for the industry, so "country music for city folk" popped out. That description also leaves us the freedom to break away from country when we want. As far as I'm concerned, most of our music isn't country at all so, it wasn't really a conscious effort. But now that I'm here, I really like it.

Give me some details on notable songs, such as the funny "ass/jeans" tune.

Our most popular song right now is "Those Jeans" alternately known as "The Ass Song," or "The Pantyline Song," "the song about the ass." You get the idea. I wrote it after leaving the house one day. My wife had just tried on about six outfits in three minutes, each time asking "Does my ass look fat in this?" I'd said "Your ass doesn't look fat..." so many times, that I think the phrase must have stuck. I left the house and was saying it over and

over "Your ass don't look fat in those jeans" and the rhythm of the sentence wrote the song for me. Within the next 20 minutes, I had the whole song in my head. I had the key change and everything. I'd say that it's as if God gave me the song, but I'm not sure that is one of God's songs about asses. I'd have to say my vision where he's doling out asses. I'd have to say my wife gave me



that song.

A much more serious song is The Burden. Not a funny story by any means, but a true one also. I'd written the chorus years before the song was written. "I wanna go out to the ocean side, walk in the water, let it take me under," and I loved it, but I didn't know what to do with it. Years later, I was on the train platform (train platforms and laundromats are where most of my songs have been written) and the verses just hit me. The girl the song is about was going through a tough time and I'd just been talking to her. I just wrote it as if it were a conversation we were having. It's one of my favorites, but one that we don't do too often because it doesn't necessarily fit in with our show.

Give us some info on really cool gigs that you did...

Really cool gigs eh? I think my favorite gig was an outdoor 4th of July Raffle to Benefit a Firehouse in Lynnport, PA. First of all, the pay was great. Then, since it was my uncle who got us the gig, all my relatives were there and my dad and uncles got on stage with us at various times to sit in on old country classics like "Your Cheatin' Heart" and "Hey Good Lookin'". One uncle is a square dance caller and a lot of my cousins dance, so they got up and did some dancing and we got to back them up while an accordion player led us.

The stage was completely done up in Americana decorations, it was the best decorated stage I'd ever seen. We played and watched the sun go down

over the horizon.

We were supposed to play four sets that day and had all our favorites stacked in the last set, but at the end of the third set, we started to see lightning over the hills. We went into "Ghost Riders In The Sky" and finished the song right before the rains came in. It was disappointing not to play that last set, but we'd never had such an appropriate moment for "Ghost Riders..." before, so it was worth it.

Can you tell about Miller’s Farm on the radio?

We're getting a bunch of radio play, mostly "Sweet Cherry Wine" and "Williamsburg Cannonball," on stations all around the country and around the world. I got hooked up with an Americana radio ring pretty early on and they were great about giving me more contacts and playing my music.

Do you have any big plans in the near future?

I've recently co-founded an organization called the **New York City Country Coalition (NYCCC)** with members of three other NYC country-ish bands. The goal of the organization is to create a community of like-minded bands who can call on each other for advice, assistance, and camaraderie. We join up for shows and try to help create a scene in NYC using the NYCCC name.

We've already done a few shows, featuring the four bands involved and incorporating other types of entertainers (my favorite is Vulnavia Queen of Nails,

who drives nails up her nose) with a decent amount of success.

After the next show in February, we're going to branch off into promoting individual shows and using each other to help promote these shows. What I want to do is create a City Jamboree which will take place in Brooklyn and will feature two or three bands, and will also have elements that will vary from show to show, such as jugglers, talent show aspects (using members of the audience), square dancers (my cousins), Vulnavia, fire eaters, skits, whoever I can link up with that would make it an interesting night. I know that I get tired of just seeing bands when I go out and I want to create an evening that I would actually want to be a part of as an audience member, something that will appeal to the jaded hipster mentalities of NY twenty somethings.

Any conferences or other notable gigs coming up?

NYCCC
February 8th - 8:00 p.m.
at Fez under Time Cafe
380 Lafayette Street, NYC
\$10 - cheap!

Are you currently working on any new songs or recordings?

We've just recently finished up our new EP that will be released in April (if all goes well with duplication) and will feature four new songs (including "Those Jeans") as well as an enhanced portion with the video, for computer

users to check out.

Speaking of the video, it's in rotation on New York's Metro Channel for the winter season.

Also, SBS records has chosen one of our songs, "Doin' Time," off our new EP to feature on their 2002 spring sampler.

If you can give us some details on yor website, that would be cool, you have an awesome site...

www.MillersFarm.net

Make sure you check out the "Williamsburg Cannonball" video. The filmmakers did a fantastic job, and they want to do more and they're still relatively affordable and great to work with.

www.NYCCCcountry.org

This is the site I designed for the NYCCC. It's still pretty rudimentary, but it's getting there as we roll along.

Thanxx Bryan! Be sure to catch Miller’s Farm at the nearest hoe-down or NYC venue, depending upon which one you’re closest to!

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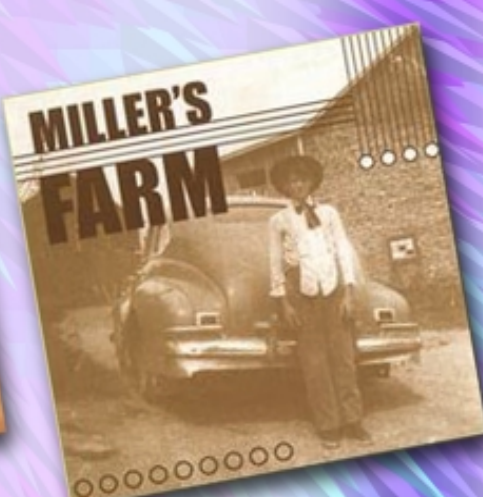
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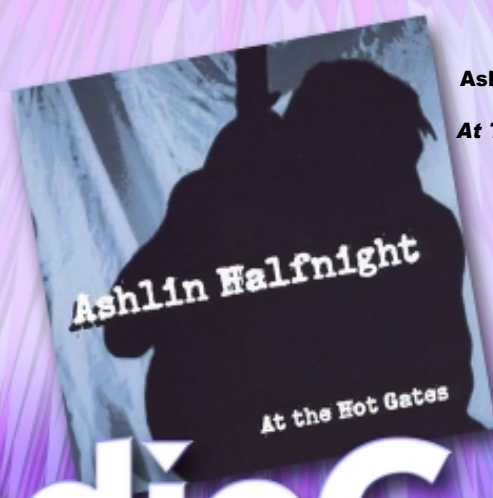
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www.IndieGate.com

THE BEST ALBUMS OF 2001 THAT YOU PROBABLY

by Steve Bornstein

The theme this year is happenstance. While our culture is shifting its input source from random to directed, we still hear about things by keeping open to happy accidents. This can be very fluky, but it is often rewarding.

Another inexplicable occurrence is the number of high quality live recordings that appeared this year. Perhaps this is a reminder that music is still meant to be heard as it is produced in performance, with the possibility of transcendent moments as well as imperfections, rather than in the controlled environment of recording studios and home entertainment centers. Get out and support performers in concert; that's what they're there for!

As always, the recordings on my list may be unfamiliar to many of you. That does not mean they are less worthy of your attention; it is more a result of their having been passed over by mainstream radio, MTV, and press. As always, these albums have passed the first five songs rule - if an album sustains your interest for the first five songs, it is likely to keep your interest the rest of the way, and very likely the rest of your life. And as always, if you buy any of these albums based on my recommendation only to be completely disappointed, I will personally buy it from you. I can always find it a home.

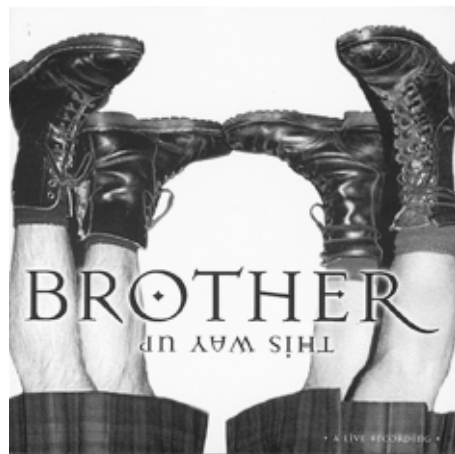


Deni Bonet - Bigger Is Always Better
(MR2 Records) www.denibonet.com

Few albums that appeared this year were

more anticipated or longer overdue than this one. Deni Bonet is a classically trained violinist who went on to bigger and better things quite some time ago - first as a founding member of the house band for Mountain Stage, the prestigious live performance radio show carried on NPR that originates from West Virginia, then after moving to New York, and doing session and backup work with artists like Robyn Hitchcock and a then-unknown Sarah McLachlan, to leading several bands of her own. She has released two EPs over the years, and most of those songs and several more are collected here on her first full length album. And it's about time. Deni has the most rocking violin tone I've ever heard - and yes, that includes Jerry Goodman and Michal Urbaniak - full-bodied, vibrant, and never shrill. In her masterful hands the violin is transformed into a real rock and roll instrument, more than just an amplified acoustic one. Which is not to say that she won't play it in a more customary fashion, just that she has greatly expanded the possibilities. When you hear a searing, distorted lead on this album, rest assured it's violin. But furthermore, her musicianship is dedicated to a songwriting craft that is surpassed by few. Often sarcastic or satirical, her attitude carries the lyrics. I'm not sure why she didn't include the f word in "Sunshine," when she also includes a clean version with "love" in its place. I could have done without the drum programming on a couple of songs. I think she should have started the album with "Alone," as she does most live shows. I also wish she had included her "coffee rap" that invariably cracks up the audience in the title song. For that, and for an awful lot of other reasons, you'll have to hear her live. But these are minor quibbles, certainly worth overlooking when there is so much good stuff going on here.

Hint: Anyone who starts an album with a song whose first line is "I'm not crazy," probably is, at least a little. And thank goodness for her refusal to be normal. We all benefit from her being a little out there.

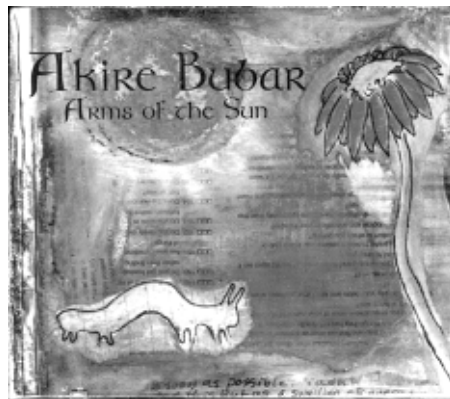


Brother- This Way Up (Rhubarb Records)
www.brothermusic.com

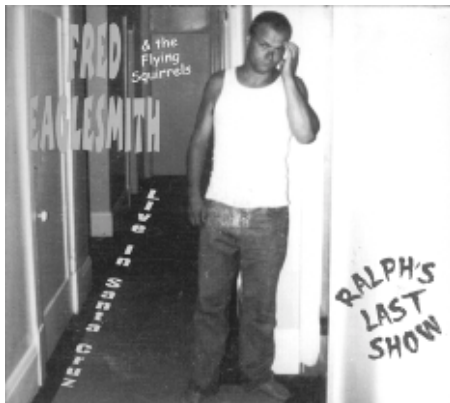
This band from Australia mixes standard rock instrumentation with Aboriginal didgeridoo and Scottish bagpipes to create what they call "Australian mongrel rock." Led by brothers Hamish and Angus Richardson, who switch off on the wind instruments and also take turns on guitar and bass, they have been romping around Down Under for ten years. They occasionally come to America (imagine them opening for Alicia Keys at Cleveland's Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame last August), and this album was recorded live in San Juan Capistrano, CA. Although their sound bears some resemblance to other British Commonwealth bands, most noticeably Men At Work and Big Country, they really have a distinctive sound, familiar yet fresh. I hope they make it out east next time they come to America.

Akire Bubar - Arms Of The Sun
(Red Clover Records) www.akire.com

One of the pleasures of going to folk festivals is the serendipity that occurs when so many performers are put on the stage in front of so many people. Listeners may be there to hear some of their favorite performers, but may also happen upon others they had never heard before. At last year's Clearwater Revival I happened to hear a lovely lilting voice wafting through the air as I walked from one stage to

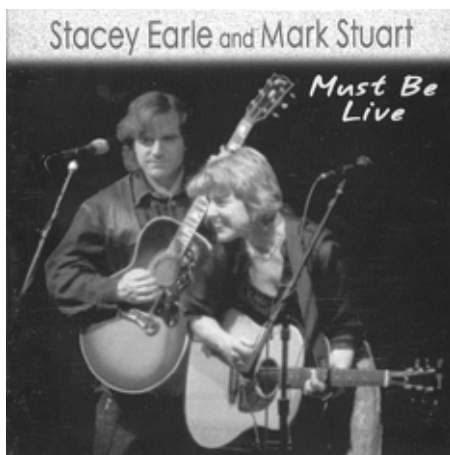


another. Consulting the program helped determine the identity of this singer, and happenstance led our paths to cross later. This promising debut by a young self-assured artist is refreshingly free of overwrought emotionality so typical of first efforts. Most of the songs are originals, and most are performed by just herself on guitar and mandolin, though some feature harmony vocals and violin. She also teaches workshops on using the voice as a meditative instrument. She does occasionally venture away from her home near Philadelphia, so keep an eye (and ear) out for her. Albums like this are fulfilling not only in their own right, but also bear hope and promise for the future.



Fred Eaglesmith - Ralph's Last Show
(Signature Sounds) www.signature-sounds.com

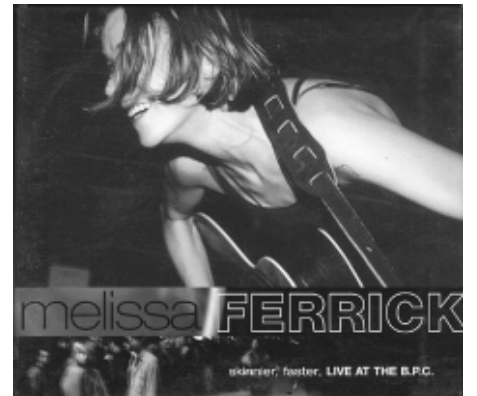
This Canadian has been traversing North America for so long that he has finally worn out one of The Flying Squirrels, his backup band. As there are only three of them, plus occasional assistance from Washboard Hank, and Ralph Schipper was the bass player, this is surely bound to herald a significant change for him. Still, the redoubtable Willie P. Bennett provides such solid accompaniment on mandolin he may bear this change in stride. Fred's songs touch on various reworkings of several down-to-earth themes: women, drinking, cars, guns, trains, dogs and other animals. As he asks in one tongue-in-cheek song, "When exactly did we become white trash?" He may not be, really, but he sure knows the lifestyle in and out. This live double album contains virtually all of his best material, as well as the excitement of his rip-roaring live shows, and is an excellent place to start learning about one of our more endearing if rough-hewn poets.



Stacey Earle and Mark Stuart - Must Be Live
(Gearle Records) www.staceyearle.com

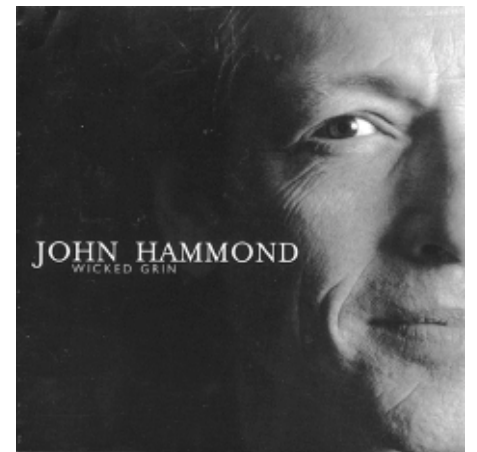
This collection presents these two love birds in all their goshdarned cute-as-a-button charm and cheeriness in live performance. Well, it's usually Stacey with the cuteness, and Mark with the chops, but it always works out to winning you over within just a few

beats - they are that charming. Most of the songs from their two studio albums are here, plus a few new ones. What really sets this apart from most other live albums is the excellence and simplicity of the arrangements and, again, the charm of their presentation. The title, by the way is a play on one of Stacey's songs, "Must Be Love." It really is.



Melissa Ferrick - Skinner, Faster - Live At The BPC
(Right On Records) www.melissaferrick.com

Melissa Ferrick is one of the most commanding solo performers on the circuit today. Her fearlessness and honesty drive her performances. She may sometimes paint herself into a corner, say, by starting a song too fast, but she will never just stop and then start it at the right tempo. She will always work through any such error and find a way to make it work. There are moments like this in any concert, even here, but somehow the way she solves such problems is just as entertaining as if she just played her powerful songs flawlessly. This double album was recorded at Boston's Berklee Performing Center one warm spring night, and captures all the excitement of this dynamic performer in all her ragged glory.



John Hammond - Wicked Grin
(Pointblank Records) www.virginrecords.com

This album is so clearly destined for greatness it's a wonder nobody thought of doing it before. Couple a great songwriter with a great singer and chances are good you'll get a great album. That's exactly what happens here: John Hammond, one of the best blues singers around, interpreting the songs of Tom Waits, one of America's best songwriters. Because Waits is such an idiosyncratic performer, it's been hard to separate his writing from his performance until now. Hammond has always had a sure feel for the writer's intent, never clearer than here. Waits' imagery has often tended toward a practical surrealism, in which recognizable images are juxtaposed in unusual combinations. Hammond delivers these lyrics with a matter-of-fact immediacy that renders them readily credible. They use some solid, well-worn talent for backup: Larry Taylor from Canned Heat on bass, Augie Meyers from The Sir Douglas Quintet on piano and accordion, and Hammond even forgoes his own mastery of the harmonica to defer to Charlie Musselwhite on all except one song. This is a remarkably solid album, destined for longevity at my place.

The Lonesome Brothers - Swamp Town Girl
(Captivating Music) www.lonesomebrothers.com

The Lonesome Brothers are Jim Armenti and Ray Mason, both solo artists in their own rights, and drummer Bob Grant. Ray is a fine guitarist, though here he plays mostly bass, while Jim handles the leads on guitar, mandolin, and a bit of accordion. Each sings the songs he has written, which is about the only way to tell them apart, as they have worked together so much over the years

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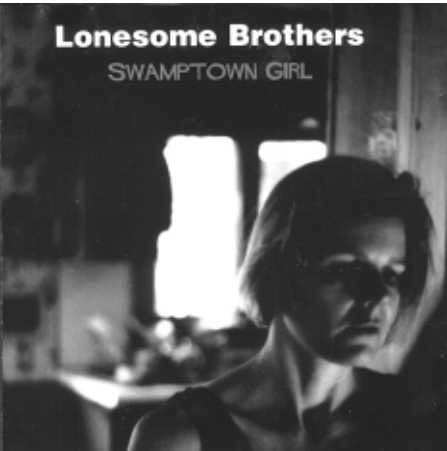
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HAVEN'T HEARD OF (BUT SHOULD HAVE)

by Steve Bornstein



they have grown into each other's styles. Ray's funky down home back porch blues "Pass The Wrench" starts the album amiably enough, then Jim's "Pile Of Paper" gets things going, with its stomping beat just slightly offset by a dropped beat in the chorus to keep you off balance. They follow this with Ray's "Early In The Spring," a wistful tale of lovers meeting at the wrong time, underscored by Doug Beaumier's dreamy pedal steel. Jim's "Took Me For A Ride" does exactly that for the listener with its loping Western swing. In fact, these last three songs represent one of the strongest such stretches on an album I've heard all year. This album is full of such solid country/rock gems, all with their distinctive delights. This album shows that there is more going on in the Pioneer Valley than folk and pop. Indeed, Ray Mason has put out a worthy album nearly every year for the last decade, and is something of an unknown treasure right in his own stomping grounds.

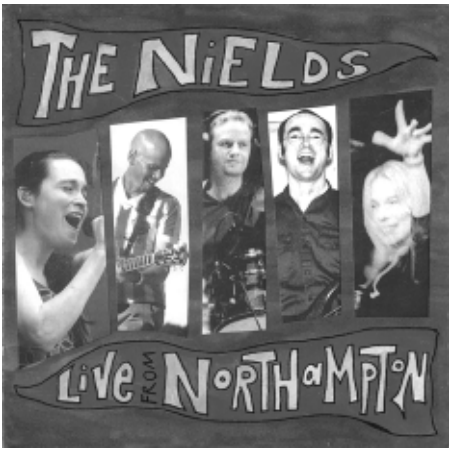


Mary Lou Lord - Live City Sounds (self-released) www.maryloulord.com

Mary Lou Lord has been busking around Boston for ten years or more. Even though Columbia signed her and released an album in 1998, she has continued playing in the subway and Harvard Square to keep the cash flow moving. This album was recorded on a portable DAT recorder, but somehow ambient noise was kept to a minimum. She has written a good number of fine songs, but all but one of these fifteen songs are covers, showcasing her taste in material and ability as an interpreter. Her voice is wispy and needs the portable amplification she uses, but is still very evocative. Her guitar playing is solid if unsurprising, and serves her well. This album is scheduled to be re-released shortly on Rubric Records, with an added attraction: the studio version of "Speeding Motorcycle" currently appearing in Target commercials.

The Nields - Live From Northampton (self-released) www.nields.com

The Nields are one of the most fascinating bands I've ever encountered. They most closely approximate what I call "the complete package. Every aspect of their music - writing, arranging, singing, instrumentation, production, artwork, stage presence - is consistently of high quality. Their albums always rank in my top five, and if they have never garnered the top spot it is because they have been edged out for one reason or another, but always just barely. Well, not this time. This double live album, culled from four shows recorded at The Iron Horse in Northampton MA, where they are local heroes, shows them at the peak of their creative powers, and also adds the charm of their engaging live presence. While the opening cut, "Jack The Giant Killer," is an odd choice, as it requires a bit of familiarity



with their oeuvre, things move right along and one is soon swept up in their brilliant literate pop, as the songwriting by Nerissa and David Nields tell such cleverly constructed stories. I actually listen to disc 2 more, as contains some of their very best songs, starting right in with "This Town Is Wrong" and continuing through the chilling "I Know What Kind Of Love This Is," the insouciant "Best Black Dress," and the pop confection of "Jennifer Falling Down," which features a guest appearance by Dar Williams (who had literally driven up right after her show in Hartford that night). They also include a rare performance of what some aficionados call "Blue Greta." This reworking of the title song to their fourth (or fifth) album, "Gotta Get Over Greta," starts at a much slower tempo, the Vanilla Fudge approach. At the end of the bridge, there is a point where Katryna sings a high "yeah!" four times before the song goes back to the final verse. In this version, just when you've decided that the whole song is going to be done at the slow tempo, Katryna yells those "yeahs" as loud as she can as the band switches to the regular tempo and kicks out hard behind her. This is one of the great moments in rock and roll history.

By the way, that bit of applause you hear during the instrumental in "Best Black Dress" is a reaction to the band step-kicking in time, as they usually do at that point - except for drummer Dave Hower, of course.

This album was not intended to be a swan song, but it functions as one. The band, which started as an acoustic trio, then swelled to a quintet, has now reduced to an acoustic duo of just the sisters owing to financial restraints. It also seems that David Nields is not only out of the band but also out of the house. So this captures a moment in time which may never be revisited. It's been a good run, but it's sad to see this happen. I've long thought of The Nields as the little band that could. At least, at last, they have truly earned my vote for Album Of The Year.



The Philadelphia Jug Band - The Philadelphia Jug Band (self-released) 610-626-0012

The nucleus of this band is Jim Klingler, Frank Zemlan, Steve Miller, and Dave Gauck - four high school friends, who became enthralled by the rambunctious ragtime/blues jug band sound back in the early 60s. They formed their own outfit, did a few gigs, and went their separate ways soon after graduating. They get together every year at the Philadelphia Folk Festival, where they draw huge crowds to hear them play at their campsite, and at one or another's house for New Year's Eve. After years of threatening, they finally recorded an album of many of their favorite numbers, most of them jug band classics. They enlisted some instrumental help from old friends, including Sam Adams on mandolin, "Mandolin" Steve on mandolin and tenor steel guitar, and producer Bob Beach on harmonica. This

album proves that even long-overlooked traditional musical forms can still find relevant expression in today's over-commercialized marketplace. It's refreshing to hear people play music that they love, just for the sheer pleasure of playing it.



Allison Pipitone - Shake It Around (Slice Records) www.alisonpipitone.com

One of the joys of working at a magazine like this is that every now and then, out of all the CDs sent in by aspiring hopefuls, something stands out and demands to be heard. This is just such a one. Pipitone writes and plays straight-ahead, no-nonsense rootsy rock - nothing really fancy, but nothing slack either. She has a sure hand with both lyrics and melody, and has a solid band backing her up.. I'm not sure how shthis Buffalo nativeooked up with the publicist ffrom Daemon Records, Indigo Girls' label based in Georgia, but I am very glad this unassuming gem showed up here.



Eddi Reader - Simple Soul Compass Records www.compassrecords.com

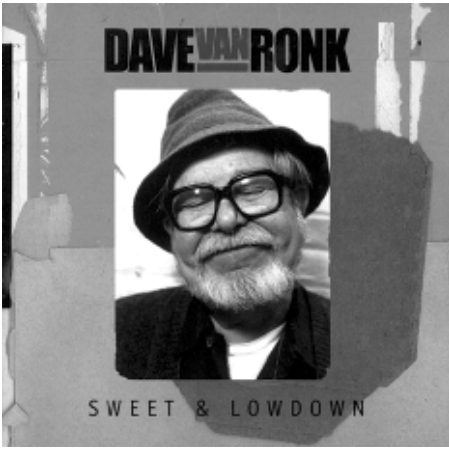
I happened to catch the tail end of a broadcast on NPR's "Thistle and Shamrock." An unidentified female singer was describing a project that brought roots-oriented artists from America and Britain together, and interspersed with the commentary were songs that featured a lovely, captivating voice. I did not catch her name, but did recall a few of the artists she mentioned and a song title. Putting these bits of information into a search engine revealed her name - Eddi Reader. She seems to be rather well known across The Pond, but is only now beginning to be noticed over here. Compass Records in Nashville signed her for distribution stateside, so now her catalogue is more readily available.



Boz Scaggs - Dig (Virgin)

Boz Scaggs is one of the best vocalists from the 60s still around after all this time. If you don't want to take my word for it, dig out your copy of The Steve Miller Band's "Sailor" and listen to him on "My Friend." His

first few solo albums showcase this talent in the service of his music, an extraordinarily complex yet seamless mingling of blues, country, and sweet soul music. His female counterpart was Tracy Nelson, who is also still working in these rootsy areas. Boz found success almost accidentally in the disco era with his "Silk Degrees" album and its monster hit, "Lowdown." This was one of the brighter moments of disco, and worked for me because it was still soul music, just with a fat bottom and pop stylings. Hardly a household name anymore, he got back to his roots a couple of years ago with the blues-based "Come On Home," well-received critically but not commercially. That's probably what's going to happen with this one too. That's a shame, because these eleven songs demonstrate that sweet soul music is every bit as real and relevant as it ever was, even if it has been largely ignored by even the Afro-American community. Interestingly, one of the best of this very good collection is the Latin-inflected "Call That Love," replete with tongue-in-cheek double entendres. It's hard to resist a song that starts off with the coy line, "There's a fire down the street, about five foot three." Produced with care and capability by Danny "Kootch" Kortchmar and David Paich from Toto, this is one of the best sounding albums I've heard this year.



Dave Van Ronk - Sweet & Lowdown (Justin Time Records) www.justin-time.com

This venerable stalwart, veteran of The Great Folk Scare of the 60s (as he calls it), is still at it nearly half a century after he started out. He may have health problems, he may be losing what he has left of his voice, but he has lost none of his exuberant will and innate sense of what works in interpreting songs. While he is best known for blues and ragtime, he also has dabbled occasionally with jazz and swing (his version of "Swing On A Star" is definitive.) This collection of standards is a real treat for anyone who knows there is more to the material than just singing the words in time and on pitch. He gets inside these songs so completely that each one sounds new, yet familiar. With accompaniment ranging from just his expertly fingerpicked guitar to various small combos, care has been taken to present the songs with just the right balance of subtlety and grit.



Lucinda Williams - Essence (Lost Highway) www.losthighwayrecords.com

The phenomenal success (for her, and the genre) of 1998's "Car Wheels On A Gravel Road" helped propel Lucinda Williams into the glare of the media spotlight, where she has never been comfortable. Subsequent touring and its attendant pressure led to the breakup of a longtime relationship which had helped sustain her through the lean years leading up to this and the whirlwind

Cont'd on Page 11

dreampopping

Noel Ramos takes you along for the ride as he discovers a new genre of music called Dreampop, or Shoegazer

I don't know about you, perhaps you're so much more worldly than I, that you would not be surprised to hear the term "shoegazer" in reference to a style of music. I, however, did my best Mr. Spock impression, complete with quizzically raised eyebrow when I saw the descriptions; "dreampop," and "shoegazer" being used to delineate an apparently new genre.

I learned all I know thus far about this very popular style from a Yahoo Group I stumbled across while browsing through the well-known website for internet-based discussion groups. The "Blisscent" list is huge, one of the largest I've seen on Yahoo, featuring over 2100 fans talking about bands like Snowpony, Cocteau Twins, Aerial Love Feed, Aislars Set, Boo Radleys, Colfax Abbey, Curve, Ashengrace, Orchards & Vines and so many more.

Some names were familiar to me, much more so than their music, having heard many of the bands' monikers over the years without getting the opportunity to experience their sounds. It seemed at first that "dreampop" was merely a progression of new wave and alternative, but then as I learned more, I began to sense large components of ambient, electronica and techno. It's an interesting amalgam of sounds that defines this "shoegazer" music, and as that nickname suggests, it's often slow, mellow, almost elevator music.

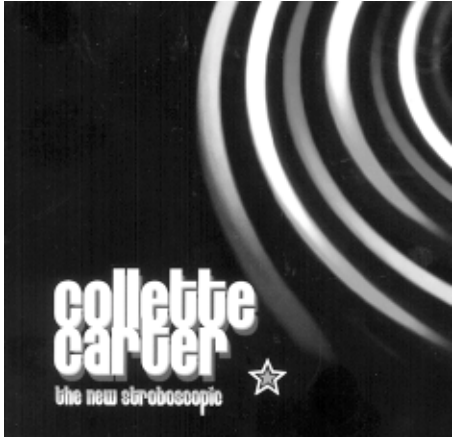
Consisting of much repetition and almost always purely instrumental, the music I've heard thus far has me wondering if I even like this stuff! I suspect that it's a style that draws as much strong criticism as it does praise. Some of the CDs I am reviewing did indeed get my head bobbing and I found myself humming along... which is about all you can do to an instrumental that sounds like a soundtrack to a futuristic thriller.

If they dance to this stuff, (probably while staring at their shoes,) it's got to be a pretty slow dance style. I have also seen references to apparent off-shoot styles, such as slow-core, sad-core, slo-fi and snorecore. As is obvious, *mellow* seems to be the main emphasis.

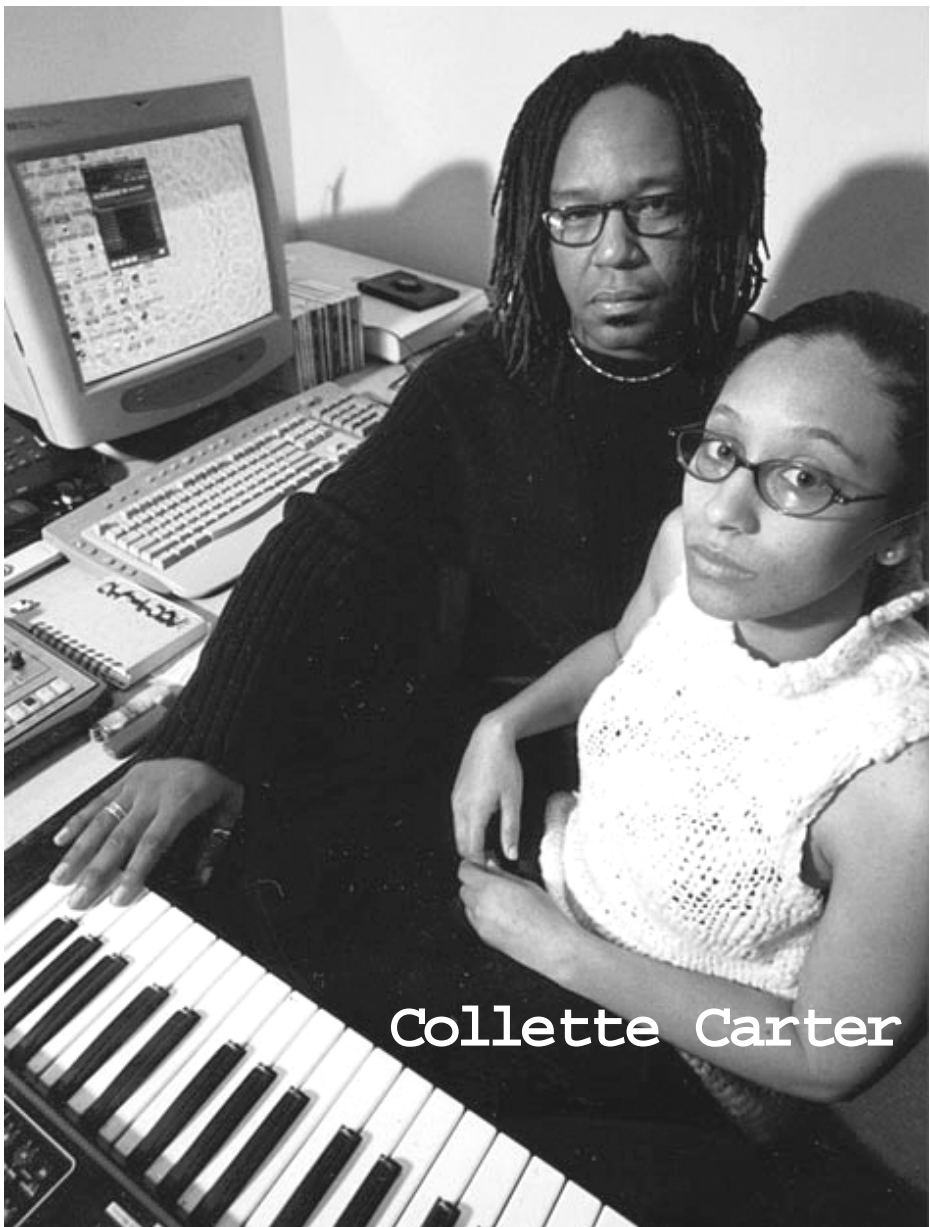
Quite often on the Blisscent list, I also see references to older bands, such as the Stone Roses and Charlatans UK, and I get the sense that shoegazer has evolved from a variety of other genres, as has been the case with most, if not all, musical sub-sets.

So, as I explore and examine the dream[pop]scape, I hope you'll join me on this rare musicological expedition, as I enjoy one of the more pleasurable aspects of my job... musical discovery.

The first CD I listened to, came from an indie label called **TBTMO** that features a number of shoegazer bands on its roster. I'll review the discs I received.



The band is called **Collette Carter**, and the disc's title is; "*The New Stroboscopic*." No members are actually named Collette Carter if you're wondering, the name was inspired by a high school friend.



Collette is getting good press, and seems to be a standard-bearer of sorts in the Philly Ambient/Electronica scene. Long-time romantic and working partners; Rod Sledge

instrumentals. The ten song CD starts off with "Wait," and while it's definitely slow and trippy, it also juxtaposes some surprisingly poppy beats. A bit of an edge creeps in



and Wilynda have been setting, revitalizing and re-inventing trends for over 11 years now.

The disc features Wilynda's beautiful vocals, so I am already happy as I listen to a dreampop album that *isn't* all

just when you least expect it. Subtle? Yes, so don't let your guard down, or Rod will get you with a hook.

The tracks move through more of the same treatment, as the songlist progresses,

but the duo never lets you get bored. The title song appears third to last and makes good use of Wilynda's sampled vocals. A lush tunes with synth sounds nicely overlaid to create a denser soundscape. Overall a very pleasant intro to dreampop. Check out Collette Carter at www.tbtkmo.com.

Speaking of TBTMO Records, the label's founders are rather well-known in the scene as a rallying force, and many musicians collaborate in various combinations using a wide variety of names. Rod Sledge for instance, also performs with TBTMO's owners; Rob Cantagallo and Mike Page - the Jersey natives of electronic duo **Mall**.

Mall's CD is one of the discs I am having a hard time wrapping my head around. I am apparently not alone, as Rob hilariously points out by having the balls to print the questionable review right on his home page, leading off with the editorial note of: "Hardy har har." I admire his attitude.

While I disagree with the review's more negative observations, I can't help but think that, at some point, (like after listening to the 5th or 6th cut on the CD) it just starts to sound like noise. The review stated, "Mellowed, tripped-out techno..." and "a playful video game soundtrack..." "which dissolve into synth-ambient deconstruction or noise."

I don't know though... I have to admit to being quite a bit impressed with what these guys have accomplished between the label, their various musical projects, and the virtual construction of an entire shoegazer scene in the Philly area.

Another area that impressed me about the Mall release, which is entitled; "05.17.2012 01:34:28 PM -0400" is the graphic treatment. The name uses the upside down letter and number technique to spell "mall," and all the song titles do the same, such as "mɪnɪdɪsk 1," or "Minidisk 1" in plain English.

Rob and Mike make sure to inform everyone in the CD booklet, that they used "cracked programs, unauthorized samples, fucked equipment and illegal substances." As I listened to the protracted synth bits repeating and repeating, I imagined the boys squatting 'round the hookah while programming lavish techno-jams... then it hit me... They're the techie-geek version of Dead-Heads! It's a techno-jam band!

I am not sure it would serve much purpose to go into the Mall disc cut by cut, so I'll end with an admittedly wimpy ambivalence. Perhaps we'll revisit Mall in a future edition of Dreamopping/Shoegazing. As I learn more about this style of music, I may just "get it," and then I'll be raving about Mall's sheer genius and be able to dissect each composition with the precise skill of a neuro-surgeon. Uhhhhhh... OK maybe not. If you'd like to check them out just click the disc below and be transported to their site.



Continuing the inbreeding, Rob does double-duty in **Arkitekchur**, and this disc, entitled "*Of Solids, Climate and Homes*" has me even more confused, if that's possible. Consisting of two tracks, beginning with

shoegazings

Noel Ramos takes you along for the ride as he discovers a new genre of music called Dreampop, or Shoegazer

"Yourself In" which is only one minute and two seconds long, and consists of a rather strange sound repeated briefly. End of... "song?" Not sure it really *is* a song.



The title cut is a true Techno-Dead-Head's joy... a 20 minute excursion into some strange zone populated by fuzzy reverb, repetitious samplings of distorted phone messages and random analog sounds that have been "freakulated."

I don't think I'll be "getting" this one any time soon. I'll try to remain open-minded, but to be honest, I've heard heartbeats that were more interesting.

Rob continues his prodigious output with yet another project... **.o0 Transient 0o.**

This one I could get behind, much more uptempo and energetic, with ambitious overlaying of samples and sounds, juxtaposed with more expected mellow waves. I was transported back to happy memories of raving til the wee hours at 7 Willow Street in Portchester, NY, where, once upon a time, Scotty Marz and other DJs kicked out the techno til the sun came up.

Again, it seems moot to actually discuss individual cuts here, but I will say that some dipped a bit too far into the redundancy pool. Most were quite enjoyable though, even as purely listening material, and I could definitely see people moving to these tracks. Some choice usage of sampled vocals spiced it up with a hip-hop vibe and the combo was tasty. I'd love to hear more material in this vein.

I was also sent a copy of a disc by a band, called **Turnerjoy**. This was my fave by far. Featuring vocals, which immediately helped my disposition, the disc demonstrates an abundance of talent and potential. Turnerjoy are media darlings, and for good reason. Drawing comparisons to REM, XTC, Radiohead, and even being touted as the successors to the now defunct Smashing Pumpkins, Turnerjoy's press kit is overflowing with praise. The CDEP, entitled; *"Cigarettes*



and Serevent" starts off with an organ built funeral dirge and then flits into a spacey ditty. Then back to the eerie organ and the roller-coaster ride begins.

Featuring a line-up consisting of "six friends"



and a breeding ground of trailer parks in the Chicago area, it's no wonder that Turnerjoy's sound would be so delightfully askew. During the summer of 1998, Dean Perrine

bathtubs, awnings, porch swings, and who knows what else. These hours of car-time gave them quite an opportunity to listen to, and discuss music. Soon the two were



(vocals, guitar) and Charlie Ransford (bass) took summer jobs as servicemen for a mobile home company. The pair spent many hours together in the vehicle as they traveled to various mobile homes repairing

getting together after work as well, and dozens of songs resulted from their earliest efforts to collaborate. It was obvious that they needed a band to perform the tunes live, and others were rounded

up, to create Turnerjoy.

Named after the last warship to fire shots in the Vietnam War, the U.S.S. Turnerjoy, Perrine's group quickly began playing live, even before that first summer had ended! The line-up is rounded out by:

Marty Weisenbacher - guitar
Larry Lutrick - drums
Jodi Perrine - keyboards

The EP consists of four tunes, three original compositions and one cover, a song called "I Wanna Be Adored" by the Stone Roses. It starts off with the spacey/eerie "Home," and then continues with "Animals." The tune does feature repetitive elements, but as opposed to instrumental only CDs, the presence of vocals helps break the potential monotony.

After the cover song, the disc ends with "Heros," which makes a well-rounded finish to an impressive release. I am looking forward to the impending full-length album.



The last offering from TBMO was a compilation CD featuring these projects and more.

Notably, yet another of Rod Sledge's projects, this one a solo effort he calls Pacifica, as well as Air & Space, still more alternate output from the "Mall-rats." This bunch is definitely tight-knit if nothing else, and that's something I'd love to see happen in many more musical scenes throughout the country. We'll be visiting the respective releases of these artists as the trek through dream-land continues...

Thanxx for tuning in and if you're reading the Offline Edition of the Webzine don't forget to visit the various web sites next time you're connected.

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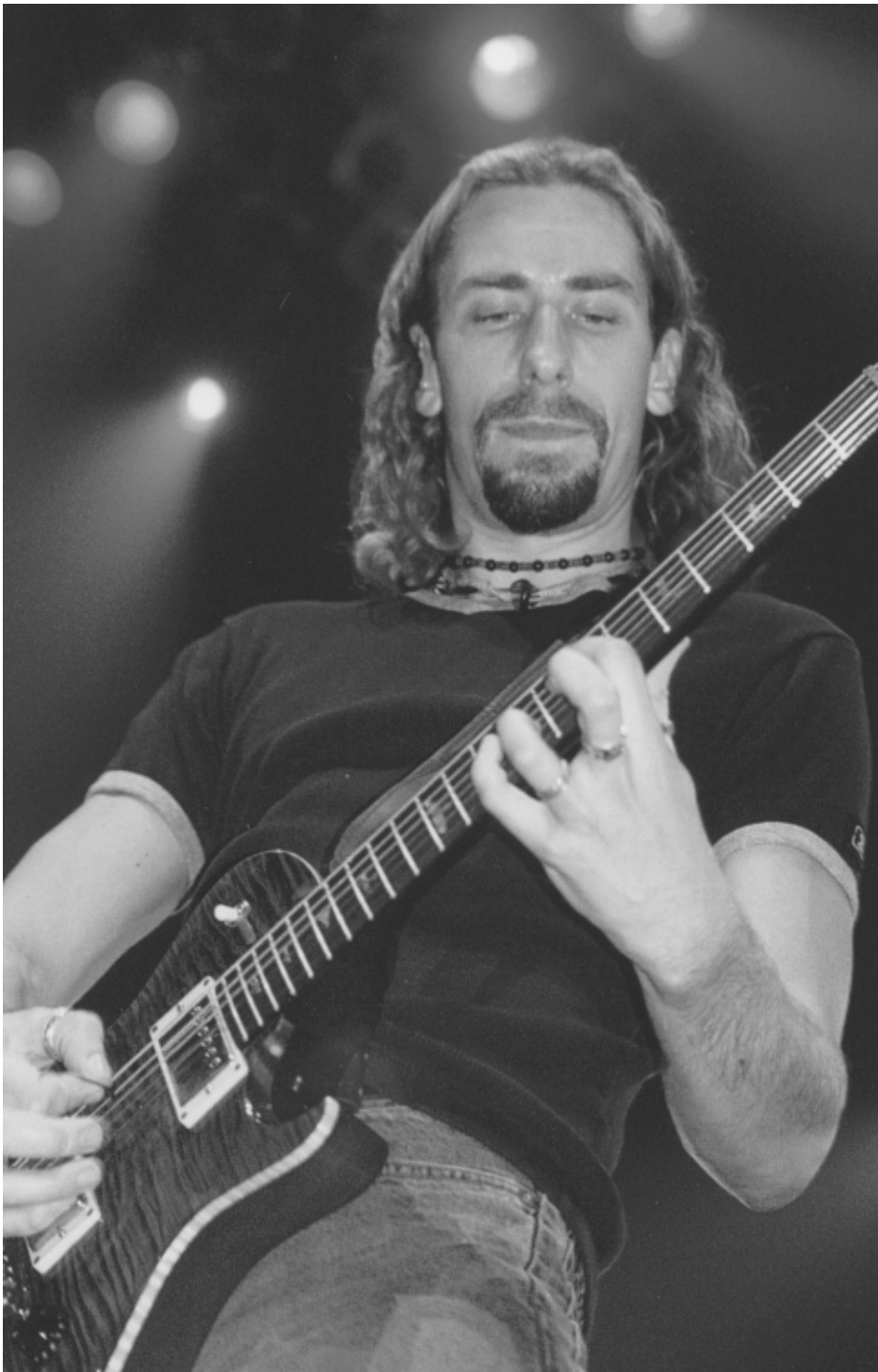
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Back to back shows at New York's Hammerstein Ballroom yielded these photos. That's Brett Scallions from Fuel, above left, and behind drummer Kevin Miller, left, and Chad Kroeger from Nickelback above.
Photos by Victoria Chandler



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"Best of 2001" Cont'd from Page 5

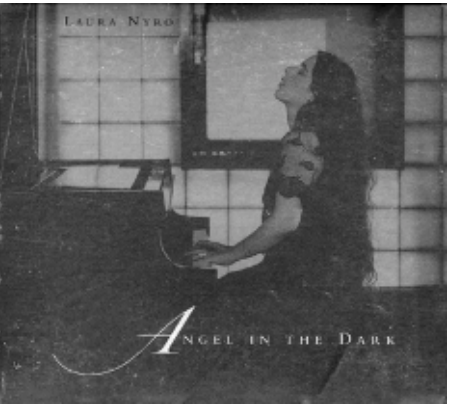
that followed. As often happens, breakups inspire songwriters, so the wait for a follow-up was much shorter. This album is a bit of a departure for this roots rocker, as most of the songs are slower and slighter than customary. The exceptions are the slinky "Out Of Touch," the gospel raver "Get Right With God," and the sultry title track. That's not to say that the rest of the album is lacking in any way, just different from what she has offered before. As producer Bo Ramsey told me, "That's the kind of songs she was writing." That makes sense to me. But if nothing else, this album is worth owning just for the enthralling, dreamy "I Envy The Wind." Full of distinct imagery which traces parallels of atmospheric and emotional conditions - winter/wind, spring/rain, summer/sun - in increasingly intimate terms, as the longed-for object of her desire remains distant. This is my favorite song of the year. And another recent breakup has led to yet another flurry of songwriting, and possibly another album this year.

REISSUES AND COMPILATIONS



Buzzy Linhart - Buzzy Linhart Loves You (Razor & Tie) www.razorandtie.com

This freewheeling hipster not only was there in the 60s, he remembers them, and still lives then as well as now. Perhaps best-known as the guy who wrote "Friends," one of Bette Midler's early hits, he enjoyed some smatterings of success, by virtue of being adept on numerous instruments and being in the right place at the right time, again and again. That's him playing the dreamy vibes on Hendrix' "Angel," for instance. And his song "The Love Is Still Growing" is covered by the Roches on the "Bleecker Street" collection, in a very spacy and space-inducing rendition. This album is a bit of everything, as Buzzy tried his hand at whatever music inspired him. It recalls some other psychedelic smorgasbords, like Moby Grape's "Moby Grape," Big Star's "#1 Record," Small Faces' "Ogden's Nut Gone Flake." A little this, a lot of that, dreams and guitars and a why-not attitude - this album is like a time capsule, or better yet, a time travel device, that transports the listener to an era full of freedom and possibility



Laura Nyro - Angel In The Dark (Rounder)

This album presents this extraordinary artist's last recordings, dating a few years before her death in 1997. Half are new compositions, half are covers of old doowop, soul and pop favorites that she used to sing waaaay back when. One of the most enduring, endearing artists ever to grace the airwaves, it's always great to hear her soulful voice in a new setting.

Jill Sobule - I Never Learned To Swim (Beyond Music) www.beyondmusic.com

This brilliant songwriter, singer, and guitarist signed with a new label last year, and released the great "Pink Pearl." While she may be treading water a bit here - well, she



says she never learned to swim - this is a fine compilation of many of her best songs to date. There are also two unreleased songs: "Big Shoes," about having to wear orthopedic shoes as a schoolkid and the resultant teasing; and "Smoke Dreams," about the intoxicating isolation of a new love affair. This is a good way to get your feet wet if you have been curious about learning more about this extraordinarily talented artist.

BEST LIVE AC
Gandalf Murphy and the Slambovian Circus of Dreams

One great determining factor which helps the more talented artists to stand above the rest is their ability to create a unique sound, beyond performing their songs well. Every time I catch GM live I feel transported to Slambovia, their realm of mystery and remembrance, wherein friendly ghosts commune with the living. As much as Joiah makes a point of giving a tip of the hat to The Who, one can also easily discern the influence of early Pink Floyd, Jethro Tull, Traffic, as well as musical tips of the hat to The Beatles and Jimi Hendrix. They also have an ingenious marketing scheme. Periodically they release official bootlegs of selected shows. Burning their own CDs, printing up their own artwork - these are every bit as enjoyable and professional-looking as their homespun studio album. This helps tide them over until they are ready to record their next album, which, judging by the wealth of live-only material, will be very soon indeed.

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