beautiful sound Popular in the 1980s and performing to crowds up and down the UK as well as in gigs outside of Britain, the Ideal Band have reformed here with a relatively new line-up consisting of Seylan Baxter and Gavin Paterson along with Ken, but have kept their original quality sound which was evident all those years ago.

Mains Castle/Fola Reinlander has to be the best track of the lot. With a quirky sound to it at times, this is one heck of a fine song to dance along to which changes beat halfway through to much success. Mainly an instrumental with the inclusion of some sublime yet brief singing at its very end, this tune demonstrates that those who ply their chosen instrument here do it very well indeed. It has to be said with all honestly that The Old Time has such a simply wonderful sound the kind of which is created by only the finest bands. With its smoothly sung lyrics and sweetly played accompaniment, I sure did enjoy this track and am sure this to be the case for others when hearing it for the first time, or even after multiple plays. Quiet Flows the Don gradually builds up to a laid back sound which is ideal for listening to during those snug winter nights when you simply want to sit back and watch the world pass you by. With this being the album's concluding track, it sure is one hell of a fine way to end what is a wonderful album. Consisting of twelve tracks with each song an absolute gem, this is an album to treasure. ***RH***
www.kencampbellscotland.co.uk

Lisbee Stainton
GIRL ON AN UNMADE BED
Marionetcd5
★★★★

English rose Lisbee Stainton comes of age as she learns to make more than her own bed

Lisbee Stainton is arguably one of the UK's most successful independent artists, having launched her career 18 months ago performing to 30,000 people at London's o2 arena. The performance marked her as the first unsigned singer-songwriter to play at the prestigious venue. Fast forward to the start of 2009, when BBC Radio 2 play-listed GIRL ON AN UNMADE BED's opening track Red for five weeks. At the time the 21-year-old red-haired Londoner was signed to indie label Marionet and working on her second album. Her launch was helped no-end by Radio 6's Tom Robinson's description of her as a 'a serious young talent.'

Equipped with her 8 string guitar, Lisbee is set to support the legendary Joan Armatrading on tour in 2010. If Robinson's 'Wow! Sensational! Absolutely mint!' praise is anything to go buy, the tour could see Lisbee winning over the star's fanbase. However, in the meantime, her album GIRL ON AN UNMADE BED has been unleashed to hopefully achieve the same feat unaided. Produced by Rupert Christie (U2, Kate Bush and Coldplay) and recorded on the whole at Abbey Road in the world famous Beatles Studio 2. Working with a producer of such high note has worked wonders for a young lady whose world has literally been turned upside down in the space of under two years. GIRL OF AN UNMADE BED exudes the end of adolescence innocence. Whilst paying tribute to her friend Harriet, Lisbee demonstrates a comical cutesiness which should have been further explored.

That is by no means deriding the mature characteristics which shine on GIRL OF AN UNMADE BED. Lead single Red is so radio friendly that it should have been an instant crossover pop hit, whilst the early twenties self-righteousness of Simply is instantly unforgettable. Catchy infectious strum/sing along appears to be a forte, be that in the shape of the jazz-infused Rainbow, the childish toe-tapper Just Like Me and the ironically cherubic *Never Quite An Angel*. Lisbee does occasionally fall short of the perfect debut, but never shockingly so. At worst she appears desperate on Wait For Me, but even that is a step short of being labelled a filler. Robinson may have described Lisbee as 'sensational,' but even though GIRL OF AN UNMADE BED is a consummate effort it rarely stops you in your tracks or prompts a wow. Rather, it demonstrates an artist who is on the edge of fully finding herself, which is far more exciting in many ways. ***JW***
www.lisbee.com

Little Johnny England
TOURNAMENT OF SHADOWS
Talking Elephant Records TECD150
★★★★

Astonishingly played and delightfully sung in a wide range of styles, this album is one of stallion-like quality

Their first studio album in six years, this folk-rock band have released here one damn good album full of so many genres and styles that you simply do not know what to applaud first.

With a slow waltzing sound to it at times, *Ginger Billy* certainly is one track packed full of simply sublime instrumentation and awesome vocals that there really is little space for anything else. If this track wasn't enough to wet the whistle, than surely *Steeltown Saturday Night* is enough to satisfy the most stubborn of audiences. Seemingly speeding up at the click of a switch, the sound that is created within a short burst of energy by all involved is quite amazing and it seems they turn the quality button up to a hundred, and not eleven. There aren't many tracks out there which wear the label of 'jovial' with pride, but *Jack's Polka/Alexa's Hornpipe/A Reel For Kelly* certainly does this. With a quirky feel about it to match, the fiddling will prove hard to be bettered as it seems to lead the way in a musical jamboree of an increasingly awesome style.

I understand that life gets in the way of many things, but surely six years is too long to wait for this band's next release as this current album is just sublime. ***RH***
www.littlejohnnyengland.co.uk

Mad Buffalo
WILDERNESS
Mad Buffalo Records
★★

Mad Buffalo aka Randy Riviere's brand of 1970's folk/country rock

WILDERNESS is the third Mad Buffalo album in a span of only five years. Mad Buffalo being the pseudonym employed by Randy Riviere (pronounced Ri-veer) for the purpose of recording his compositions. Raised in Sacramento, California, as a teenager Randy played in high school garage bands. He went on to serve in his nation's army, later finding employment as a drill rig operative, long-haul trucker and, latterly, an award winning environmentalist. Through it all music remained his greatest and consuming passion, one that he now indulges full-time. The guest players on WILDERNESS include guitar legend James Burton, Willie Nelson's longtime harmonica player Mickey Raphael, steel guitarist James Pennebaker and guitarist Michael Ward (Ben Harper, Wallflowers). Marty Grebb (Bonnie Raitt, Aaron Neville) produced the disc.

Riviere penned the twelve songs, his only collaboration being with Ward on Destination Unknown. Neil Young composed Ohio in response to the Kent State University massacre of May 4, 1970, and WILDERNESS opens with a song bearing the same title—Riviere's words focus on the landscape traversed by Ohio River—but the folk-rock backdrop employed isn't a million miles adrift from that trademarked by the prolific Canadian. As for vocal harmony there's a CSNY edge to This World which immediately follows. Characters headed for home or to heaven knows where, pervade a number of Riviere's lyrics. Rainy Day, set in a roadside diner, finds a passing biker invite a waitress to accompany him on 'the road,' while a homesick, but apprehensive, fisherman returns from a long voyage in All I Really Want. A more cryptic definition of 'the endless horizon,' merges with tales of America's restless pioneers in Destination Unknown. Set toward the close of the American Civil War Alkali/Cold Harbor, which follows, is constructed from Neil Young's country-rock song template. All in all WILDERNESS wasn't an unpleasant listening experience. As for eagerly reaching for the repeat button I'll pass. ***AW***
http://www.madbuffalo.com/

Mark Lennon
DOWN THE MOUNTAIN
VagabondsTune Recordings 84501 123723
★★

A collaboration of musicians and thought- provoking lyrics that is adequate at best

Los Angeles-based roots singer-songwriter Mark Lennon (no relation to John) releases this new EP backed with a cast of a dozen musicians with folk-rock sensibilities and aided by self-written material. The seven songs must be the pick-of-the-best, but it is curiously bankrupt of highlights and consists almost entirely of weak offerings. His duet with New York-based alternative-folk artist Simone Stevens on Wildside is an exception and marries relatable lyrics with a moody ambience and a gentle coating of clarinet, of all things: the conjured image of a crowded, smoky club is almost unshakeable.

Tennessee and My Home Town anchor the project in a down-home feel and encapsulate images buried within the southern states of America. Curiously, despite the titles, this isn't a country record, nor is it particularly folk music. Rather uniquely, it could be considered an entirely new style of music. Unfortunately, it is not different enough to gather attention from the avant-garde crowd or commercial enough to warrant it a mainstream audience. Unlike his namesake, Lennon doesn't have a particularly distinct voice and can only rely on its generic quality for endearment. In the main, this is an adequate but unremarkable effort, which could possibly engage listeners of the pessimistic alternative rock persuasion. ***DJ***
http://lennonmark.com/

Mike McClure Band
ONION
Boo Hatch Recordings BHR 001
★★★★

Southern Boogie to blow your socks off!

ONION by the Mike McClure band takes me right back to the halcyon days of my youth in the mid-1970s … no party was complete without a Lynyrd Skynyrd, Joe Walsh, Little Feat, BTO, Doobie Brothers soundtrack. Okay; many things have changed in the ensuing years, but I defy anyone not to like 'Heads down – no nonsense boogie' at a party! Many have tried to imitate this sound in the last 30 years but, it just doesn't get better than when it's played by a band hailing from the Mid West of America. Thankfully the Youth of Great Britain disagree with me because they appear to have fallen in love with the Hold Steady, Modest Mouse and Death Cab For Cutie who all sound a bit like this, but not quite as authentic.

Mike McClure has been around the Oklahoma music scene for quite a while now and this, his third album, kicks up a storm and could and