

CD REVIEWS - THE NEW RELEASES

originals—old and new. Assisting Edwards (acoustic and electric guitar, bass, mandolin, lead vocals) in this new endeavour are touring sideman Charlie Rose (bass, pedal steel, banjo) and former Northern Lights founder Taylor Armerding (mandolin, vocals), plus there's cameos by Claire Lynch (vocals), Duke Lynch (electric guitar, lap steel, mandola) and more.

There's a palpable bluegrass edge to the sound on MY LOVE WILL KEEP and that's apparent from the outset on the energetic and fiddle prominent *Surrounded*, which, according to his accompanying liner note, Edwards composed way back in 1975. *Johnny Blue Horizon*, which follows, is a tribute to the late John Denver. The album title song was composed by Mark D. Sanders and Adrienne Young, other cover songs include an interesting ballad-paced interpretation of Lennon/McCartney's *She Loves You*, plus the tail end pairing of Jesse Winchester's *Freewheeler* and Rod MacDonald's *Sailor's Prayer*. The latter song's full impact is truly felt when sung a cappella, opposed to this band-supported rendition. Elsewhere, Edwards' forgettable *Crazy Texas Woman* explores a blues groove, *How Long* equates to another bluegrass workout, while the nautically worded, acoustic waltz *Lightkeeper* was penned for the soundtrack to the Richard Dreyfuss/Blythe Danner movie *The Lightkeepers* (2009), which is set in Maine just before WWI. **Arthur Wood**
<http://www.jonathanedwards.net/general/home.php>

k d lang & the Siss Boom Bang SING IT LOUD

Nonesuch 525874

★★★★☆

It's a lang time since k d had a hit

I've never been a huge fan of Kathryn Dawn Lang, although a family friend has persevered over the years by loaning me records and CDs in the hope that I will become a convert. Possibly it's the distinctive voice; which our friend loves but I think it makes all of her songs sound like faster or slower versions of *Constant Craving*, possibly not. Which brings us to SING IT LOUD, which is a fine album; and her legions of fans will rush out and buy it regardless, but there's nothing really new or adventurous here to excite them; which is a bit disappointing.

On the plus side it is a lot more 'country' than I'd expected, especially compared to her last two releases; with slide guitars and banjos to the fore on a few tracks and k d certainly has the ability to 'sell a song' when necessary; but not often enough for my liking. As you would expect with a singer of her standing there are going to be a few really good/standout songs; and in that way she doesn't disappoint, with *Sugar Buzz*, *A Sleep With No Dreaming* and what appears to be a David Byrne/Talking Heads song, the dreamy *Heaven* all being candidates for any future Greatest Hits album that k d will issue. Everything else is 'alright' and 'innocuous' and will placate her fan base but is unlikely to win any new converts. **Alan Harrison**

www.kdlang.com



Caroline Herring THE LITTLE HOUSE SONGS

Zelleria Records

★★★★☆

An intentional collection of children's songs, with true inspiration Herring nails the storyline of the seventy-year-old book The Little House

In 1942 Boston-based trade and educational book company Houghton Mifflin published Virginia Lee Burton's forty-page children's book *The Little House*. It was the fourth of seven books for youngsters that Burton produced during her lifetime. She not only wrote the narrative, Virginia Lee was the book's illustrator. The *Little House* subsequently won the prestigious Caldecott Medal, and a decade later the Walt Disney Company made a, Sterling Holloway narrated, animated short of the book. Attesting to the longevity of its appeal, in 2007 America's National Education Association, rated *The Little House* as number 9 on their Top 100 Best Books for Children list.

Almost seventy years later Georgia-based singer-songwriter Caroline Herring has created a twelve-song suite that mirrors Burton's storyline. Virginia Lee's principle intention was capturing the passage of time by way of the generations who reside in a property, and Herring perfectly captures this via the opening *The Little House*, the ensuing *Seasons* and the closing *The Little House Reprise*. Initially the sole property located 'on a hill full of daises, with apple trees growing all around,' with *Building Of The Road* the little house is embraced by the nearby city—*The City Grew Up Around Her*—sufficient that in the subsequent *Where Are The Stars* the house questions the value of city living. The percussive *Trolley Train Blues* captures the hustle and bustle of the 'haven't got a moment to spare' pace of city life, while in the ensuing *Shabby* the little house's now ageing foundations are shaken by the newly-constructed underground railroad.

Salvation arrives in the form of a young woman who recognises the now dilapidated property as one in which her beloved grandmother once resided as a young girl—'One day she saw me like a memory, And I called to her.' Conveniently constructed of timber, *The Little House* becomes a *House On Wheels* as it is transported to another rural location—*That's Just The Place* and *I Want To Be*—where it's lovingly restored to its former glory by its new, young owner. Children's music is extremely popular Stateside. As much as anything as an educational tool, and Herring's acoustic folk-flavoured THE LITTLE HOUSE SONGS has prospective genre award winner indelibly inscribed all over it. **Arthur Wood**
<http://www.carolineherring.com/>



Lisa Miller OUT OF THE BLUES

Self released 884501415170

★★★★★

Ten top notch blues-infused country songs

Lisa Miller's debut album is packed with original songs that blend together country and blues and her vocals really suit this style of music.

The album gets off to a good start with the opening song *Talk, Talk, Talk*. Lisa's vocals are strong and although quite a heavy, rocky song, never overshadowed. *Three Hours* is a slower song with more of a country feel, charming with gentle backing. *Waterin' Hole* is a really bluesy number and Lisa's vocals are distinct and powerful as they really grab you and make you want to listen to more. *Drama Queen* is a heavy country song while *Find The Joy* is a lovely slow ballad with a quite magical vocal. *State Of Mind* is an up-beat country song with a rather traditional sound. *Storm Stirrin'* is a magnificent blues/country number, where the backing instrumentation is heavy and Lisa's vocals are on top form. The title song *Out Of The Blues* completes the album, it is another country song infused with a heavy dash of blues. The backing instrumentation is stunning and Lisa's vocals are splendid. Throughout her lyrics are honest and written from the heart. There is so much to take in on this album one listen is never going to be enough. **Sara Hunt**

<http://www.myspace.com/lisamillersongs>



Rugfire THE DIFFICULT SECOND ALBUM

Dental Records 2011

★★★

Welsh coast rockers discover a Crazy Horse

After enjoying Rugfire's BLAMVANIA SESSIONS debut album a whole lot

over the last year or so I was initially disappointed to find that they had discarded their original semi-acoustic West Coast sound and replaced it with a noisier, rockier one. But, now I've listened to THE DIFFICULT SECOND ALBUM a few times it has grown on me; especially as they more than doff their cap in the direction of Neil Young in his Crazy Horse days.

A couple of tracks really stick out; *Nothing To Say To You* has a great hook and I adore the feedback drenched guitars that the song fades out with. *Hell No* is 100 mph dirty swamp-rock and could easily be mistaken for the Drive by Truckers if you heard it on late night radio. My favourite song is the two minutes and ten seconds of pure adrenalin fuelled country-rock that goes by the name of *Dropping Bombs*—a real 'driving song'—but watch out for the speed cameras! Not everything is fast and furious; *Broadway* is a slow and sultry blues and *Fuel For The Fire* is a powerfully intense acoustic-ex-love song; and well worth listening too if you get the chance.

My two gripes are both fairly important. The vocals which appear to be shared throughout, are not exactly lost in the mix; but as Wills (I think) has a powerful set of lungs and a rasp to his voice that many singers would die for; I'd like him to have been 'featured' a little bit more. Number two is the final 'secret track.' It's a personal whinge of mine but after 20 years I still don't see the point;



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CD REVIEWS • NEW RELEASES

maverick 85