

...the new releases

Kat Eggleston

SPEAK

Paperboat Music

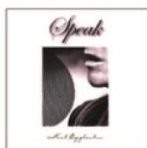
★★★★

Constructed around the bare-to-the-bone sounds of one voice and an acoustic guitar, *SPEAK* talks volumes

Kat Eggleston recently returned to her native north-west USA but before departing Chicago, her 'home' for over two decades, employing only her voice and acoustic guitar, she cut the twelve-song *SPEAK* at John Rice's studio. Self-released on Paperboat Music, the label takes its name from Kat's *Paper Boats*, which appeared on her album *SECOND NATURE*. In terms of the material recorded the *SPEAK* formula amounts to 'old, new and borrowed'.

In order of their appearance on *SPEAK*, Eggleston intentionally revisits one 'old' composition from each of her previous solo releases, namely *Home* (*SECOND NATURE* 1994), *Outside Eden* (*OUTSIDE EDEN* 1997), *Careless* (*THE ONLY WORD* 2005) and *Your Window* (*FIRST WARM WIND* 1990). As for the 'new' element, *SPEAK* opens with the enigmatic *49 Rooms*, a song Eggleston penned while attending a Lamb's Songwriter Retreat in Michigan. It's narrated by a hotel maid, who at one juncture only partially reveals her past with: 'You were my secret when I was a girl.'

The ensuing up-tempo selection *Road To Ruin* sets the scene with: 'With your first white lie, then you've just begun. On the road to ruin, who knows what you'll become?' Love and loss form the focus in *Everybody Knows*, while *Sanctuary*, a



paean to friendship, is prefaced by the Andy Cutting reel *The History Man*. Relationships, one edgy the other questioning, are respectively explored in *Trespass* and *Some Kind Of Wandering*.

Eggleston's rendition of *Birken Tree* has been adapted from the version that appears in the Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection Songs of the North-east of Scotland. The (additional) opening verse begins: 'As I rode out one morning fair, On Clyde's green banks.' That's a clear geographical error, since the River Clyde flows through the central region of Scotland. I guess it also helps that I hail from that area. That said, Kat furnishes a spirited rendition that truly captures the song's Celtic heritage.

In Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet's prayer for peace *I Come And Stand At Every Door*, the narrator is a seven year old who perished in the nuclear white light of Hiroshima. Kat's *One* written soon after 9/11, according to an album sleeve note, finds the narrator contemplate a similar holocaust—'When our cities crumble, one and all'—but toward the close attests that even in death love will remain. **AW**
<http://www.kateggleston.com/home.html>

Keith Greeninger & Dayan Kai

MAKE IT RAIN

Waimele Records

★★★★

MAKE IT RAIN is quite simply a soulful sounding, classic acoustic folk song collection

Keith and Dayan share the



production credit on *MAKE IT RAIN*, which they recorded at OTR Studio in Belmont, California through the latter part of last year. I first saw and heard Keith and Dayan on the main stage of Kerrville's Quiet Valley Ranch during 1999. On that occasion, Keith's support band included Dayan. Apart from the appearance of Steve Uccello (upright bass) and Jim Norris (drums, percussion) on three of the dozen songs—they're also members of Keith's band *Water*—Keith (acoustic guitar, percussion, vocals) and Dayan (nylon and steel string guitars, Dobro, piano, flute, cajon, vocals) are the sole contributors to *MAKE IT RAIN*.

Kai takes the lead vocal on his *I Can Make It Rain*—'If you don't believe the magic, then the magic is gone.' His melodic ballad *Thanks For All The Things You Do* is self-explanatory by its title, while *San Juan Song* portrays neighbourhood characters. Introduced by a flute solo Keith reprises *Ruby And Rose* from his City Folk trio days, and *Arsenal Of Doves* from his solo album *GLORIOUS PEASANT* (2006). A prayer for once fertile California farmland now buried below highways and factories, the former offers: 'Silicon chips they're not like trees or fruit, They don't bloom in the springtime, Bring fruit into the fall.'

Apart from the traditional and appropriately titled *Bid You Goodnight*, which closes the collection, the remaining selections are contemporary folk music covers. Jesse Winchester's late twentieth century creation *That's What Makes You Strong* launches the disc, and the duo follow with *Please Be With Me*. Penned by Scott Boyer almost forty years ago, when a member of Cowboy, it's been covered by Tish Hinojosa, Duane Allman and Eric Clapton. *Friend Of The Devil* first appeared on the Grateful Dead's *AMERICAN BEAUTY* (1970). Propelled by a (uncredited?) mandolin and aided by Messrs. Uccello and Norris, and led vocally by Keith, the duo deliver a funky rendition. *MAKE IT RAIN* also features renditions of Jackson Browne's *Our Lady Of The Well* and English writer Sydney Carter's anti-war song *Crow On The Cradle*. **AW**
<http://www.keithgreeninger.com/>

Louise Mosrie

HOME

Zoe Cat Music

★★★★

Award-winning Tennessee-based and bred writer scores a *HOME* run

Louise Mosrie was among the annual half-dozen winners of the 2009 Kerrville Folk Festival's New Folk Songwriting Contest. Released at the beginning of the year, *HOME*, which she co-produced, is this Nashville-based musician's latest recording. A finalist in the (folk oriented) Song Contest on the Singer-Songwriter Stage at this year's Wildflower! Arts & Music Festival, Louise scored one of the award winning top four places.

The familial themed album title song opens this collection of thirteen Mosrie originals and co-writes. The



funky sounding backdrop to *God Lives In Arkansas*, a song inspired by an Ozark Mountain detour that Louise and her husband undertook on the way home from a wedding in Oklahoma, will doubtless remind long-in-the-tooth readers of Bobbie Gentry's 1967 crossover hit *Ode To Billie Joe*. Mosrie's southern gothic portrait is energetically supported by the raunchy harmonica and vocal chords of Stepchild's Emil Justian. Scott Neubert (acoustic guitar, Dobro), Byron House (bass) and Butch Simmons (drums) furnish the rhythmic backbone to most of the selections, others pickers who contributed to the recording sessions include album co-producer Jon Young (electric bass), Matt Combs (fiddle) and Donna Ulisse (vocals), one of Louise's co-writers.

One of three songs co-written with Mike Richardson, *The Battle Of Blair Mountain* recalls the week long, organised armed uprising that involved over 10,000 West Virginia miners. This 1921 strike led to the partial recognition of labour unions by mine owners, and gave rise to the term 'redneck' because of the red bandana worn by the miners. Set in current times the *Backroads* and *Fly* lyrics merge themes already explored in *Home* and *God Lives In Arkansas*—the climactic line in *Backroads* being: 'Daddy lived in the country till the day he died, Now I've come to understand why.' The bittersweet *Maybe I'm Your Angel* finds this Tennessean reveal her tender side, while a failed relationship forms the focus in the ensuing *Ulisse* co-write *Don't Come Looking For Me*.

Blackberry Winter is a (Southern) term describing a short cold spell that coincides with the time blackberries are in bloom. Co-written with Mike Richardson their tuneful collaboration of the same name follows in the wake of similarly titled recent odes by David Mead (*Blackberry Winters* 2009) and Jud Caswell (*Blackberry Time* 2007). Considering Nashville's recent trials and tribulations, an outward looking positivity pervades the *I Love This World* lyric that quite simply celebrates exactly what this music town is all about. The autobiographical *Tennessee* follows, the penultimate *Sweet Relief* is gospel tinged, and Louise warps up *HOME* with the sensitive ballad *You Have My Love*.

Mosrie's compositions are thoughtful, refined creations. Given repeated listening, they will penetrate your consciousness. Spend your time thus, you'll also be hooked. **AW**

<http://www.louisemosrie.com/>

Melissa Greener

DWELLING

Anima Records

★★★★☆

Be awake and alert, expend the time, and you'll grasp the Technicolor grandeur contained within Greener's *DWELLING*

Five years on from the release of *FALL FROM THE SKY*, Greener returns with her John Jennings



Laurie Lewis

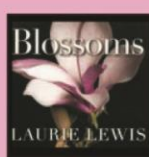
BLOSSOMS

Spruce & Maple Music

★★★★★

Sunshine music from a sunshine personality

Laurie Lewis was a new name to me, so I Googled and went on YouTube and I was sold. Some lovely music on-line meant that I came to the album with high expectations and I was not disappointed. The sound of this music was refreshing like clear air, I hope I'm not overstating here, I don't think I am. The opener, a two part a cappella *How Can I Keep From Singing* is a hymn of praise to creation—it probably echoes the 19th Psalm for those of a theological bent, whatever, it sets up the album beautifully. The second track *Lark in the Morning* written by Kate Macleod is a nice mid-tempo song of lost love, a touch Celtic and maybe a hint of Kathy Mattea here, and for some reason it also felt like a song for the road. *Chain of Letters* is next a slowish 6/8 song of lost love. Song four *Cool Your Jets* is interesting, primarily a three part vocal harmony song with an opening that nods to the Swingle Singers, this light hearted tune is a bit throwaway and maybe the weakest track on the album. There follow three songs that take us through the gamut of acoustic country sounds, *Rough Road*, *Burley Coulter's Gong* and *Unfinished Life* leading to two exquisite instrumentals—*Sophie's House* a fiddle duet written by Laurie and then the traditional *Beaver Creek*. The tenth track *Return to the Fire* is a stunner, sung a cappella it is written in Laurie's words 'for the many Vietnam veterans that I have listened to'—beautiful. *Here Today* written by Scott Huffman and Laurie is a sad little song that reads as a testimony left behind by one about to depart this life. *Train of Love* is the Johnny Cash song very well played; *Tell Me True* is a song of yearning to know the future. The closer *Sirens* is again a song that seems to be a homage of sorts to the departed. In summary then a very fine album, beautifully recorded and played. It is a little melancholy, perhaps because it is dedicated to Laurie's Dad and in part it is both a tribute and a song of mourning for his passing, but the melancholy is infused with a refreshing sense of peace and tranquility—music of the open air and full of sunshine is highly recommended. **VM**
www.laurielewis.com



produced sophomore effort. Thereon Melissa (acoustic guitar, vocals) is supported by the compact trio of Jennings (guitars, bouzouki jr, piano, keyboards, basses, drums, vocal harmonies), Inner Rhythm's leader Robert Jospe (drums, percussion) and the redoubtable Oliver Steck (accordion, trumpet). Via tightly edited lyrics that occasionally appear to be a disjointed series of flash cards, Greener succeeds in painting superb portraits of the human condition—hers and ours. The latter being no mean feat, I would advise listeners to approach this recording with an open mind and very alert ears.

Greener's *Bullets To Bite* won First Prize in the folk category of the 2009 USA Songwriting Competition, and opens the album. In the chorus Melissa examines her experiences

by Jonathan Byrd while flying home from the Lone Star state to North Carolina, *It Gets Harder To Leave Texas Every Time* is, no holds barred, one of the diamonds in this collection. In its own way, it's another song about that dwelling place—'home'. Enough said.

Perched between the foregoing covers is Greener's *Paris*, a sensual ode to love and art. Steck's low-key accordion support simply adds the finishing touch to the latter. With mention of *Serotonin*, the lyrical wild card in this particular pack is undoubtedly *Crazy*. If you possess a modicum of sailing knowledge relative to manoeuvring to port (left) and starboard (right), then the full glory and beauty of *Tack & Jibe* will become apparent. Melissa closes the album with a laid back rendering of Neil Young's soothing *Harvest Moon*.

Nash Street BETWEEN HOPE & HEARTACHE

Self released
★★★★☆
Be sure to remember this name for Nash Street is a band many will be talking about and celebrating in the not too distant future

Winners of the 2008 Colgate Country Showdown at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, this third album shows why Nash Street won that respected accolade. It was there that they were also awarded the title Best New Act in Country Music. The band consists of sisters Hannah and Caroline Melby, Clay Lezon, Ben Mathis and Daniel Hare and between them they play a whole host of instruments such as fiddle, mandolin, guitar and bass. Their music is a very home grown and organic sound which harks back to the days of Nickel Creek with the vocals reminiscent of our very own, the Haley Sisters.

The album consists of ten songs, and what accomplishments they are. *Mississippi Queen* has an extremely powerful beginning to it, and the lead vocals provided by the siblings are sublime to say the least with the instruments, such as Hannah's fiddling, doing an extremely fine job of trying to keep up with hers and Caroline's duel efforts. *Without You* is executed that sensitively it seems the slightest touch may cause a tear in it. The harmonies demonstrate that you do not have to pile a song high with instruments to make it a great one which helps towards this song's very seductive sound.

Originally from Starkville in Mississippi, they are due to relocate to Music City this summer. They have already proven to be a big hit there already, and whether or not they'll build on this popularity is anybody's guess but when they create music like this, the likelihood of this success is pretty much a certainty. **RH**
www.nashstreet.com



with the human condition—I'm awakening, forsaking, the flaming pieces left behind me. It's just growing pains, this regret and shame. But looking back it just reminds me; I've got bullets to bite.' She subsequently alludes to: 'Getting stronger stripping armor. Fitting in my skin' and, the life lesson nearing completion, concludes with the hopeful: 'Stay with me babe. Teach me to make gold from dust.' An exploration of the meaning of 'home' the narrator in the ensuing *On My Way Back Home* relates her life story, so far.

The ten song *DWELLING* features three astutely selected covers, and the first, David Rodriguez's *Ballad Of The Snow Leopard & The Tanqueray Cowboy* was a classic when he brought it to the public domain two decades on his *MAN AGAINST BEAST* (cassette) album. The years haven't altered my assertion, and here Melissa delivers a beautifully wistful rendition. Yet to be recorded by its writer, and probably penned

Absent from the three-way, fold out card liner, the lyrics to Greener's songs can be downloaded via the music button at <http://www.melissagreener.com/>.

I'm certain that further explorations of *DWELLING* will reveal even more delights and insights. That, surely, says it all. **AW**
<http://www.myspace.com/melissagreener>

The Old Dance School FORECAST

Transition Records
TRANS004
★★★★★
An album that proves an irresistible package that any self-respecting 'folk' enthusiast should be proud to feature in their CD collection

If you could sell the word 'enigma' as a product then this would be the band to display their wares accordingly. The Old Dance School don't take any prisoners in their



pursuit of enjoying themselves whilst liberating that music we tenuously label 'folk'. As a journalist, you get a gut feeling that this is one of those albums that will constantly be on whilst you're slaving over a hot computer extolling the band's virtues to anyone who'll care to listen. Throwing the listener every which way in order to bring a comfortably settled audience out of its complacent slumber, Helen Lancaster (violin), Samantha Norman (violin), Robin Beatty (guitar, vocals), Tom Chapman (cajon, vocals), Laura Carter (woodwind, vocals), Aaron Diaz (trumpet) and Adam Jarvis (double bass) succeed spectacularly in their endeavours. From the beautifully crafted opening instrumental track *The Enlil Light* the joy that emits from the speakers is enough to rejuvenate the soul of any tarnished 'hack' who's become jaded with the tried and tested. It's like the first time I heard a young Capercaille, you know there's something special and that, apart from anything else this is a band that deserves to break free from the confines of music pigeon-holing. The music is magic in their hands and the classy way in which the members combine their arrangements under the watchful eye of producer Calum Malcolm shows they have plenty left to offer. Beatty's way with words and Norman/Lancaster's nimble compositions are a mighty combination and coupled with the arty photography by John Beatty (Robin's dad!) this album proves an irresistible package that any self-respecting 'folk' enthusiast should be proud to feature in their CD collection. **PF**
www.theolddanceschool.com

Rex Foster THAT EXTRA MILE

Agarita Records
★★★★☆
Wonderful laid back collection, his sixth, from this Hill Country artisan



Five years on from, the recorded in a matter of hours, *TRIO SESSION* and almost a decade since his last studio outing, *BUFFALO ZEN*, Rex returns with *THAT EXTRA MILE* recorded at The Zone in Dripping Springs, Texas and like its 2001 predecessor produced by Peter Rowan (high string guitar, electric guitar, backing vocals). The support players on this go round being Cindy Cashdollar (Weissenborn, steel guitar, Dobro), former Dillard Jeff Gilkinson (cello, harmonica), Jeff Hogan and Paul Percy (percussion), Kevin Smith and Glen Fukunaga (stand-up bass, electric bass), Karen Mal and Tamara Haasen (backing vocals).

THAT EXTRA MILE features a dozen Foster penned originals, some co-written with others. In the case of the light-hearted, folk-pop opening number *Slow Down* that collaborator is Nashville-based hit songwriter Jon Ims. When *I Was Young*, co-written with Rowan, finds Foster muse about subjects and incidents that dogged his youthful thoughts—the vast universe, learning to swim, love's first sting, and a shooting accident that

almost ended his life.

The album title song focuses on love, there's a *Frankie & Johnnie* feel to the storyline of the ensuing Rowan co-write *Kingdom Come*, while *Gone To Town*—also penned with Rowan—features a wayward and unfaithful wife. Foster addresses a musician named Michael in *The Streets Of Austin*—while the storyline doesn't quite fit, the thought occurs that it could be Michael Elwood who has been silent for too many years. *To Say Good-bye* takes the form of a tender eulogy for his beloved late father, a Hill Country entrepreneur and one-time cinema owner. Two instrumentals, respectively *Country Road 473* and *Kendalala Moonrise*, both arranged by Rowan, close *THAT EXTRA MILE*. **AW**
<http://www.rexfoster.com/>

Ange Hardy WINDMILLS AND WISHES

Story Records
★★★★
A bit of a mixed bag between songs you can connect with and songs you fail to remember...



I Wish the opening to this album, is a bit slow and melancholy, although it communicates, the vocals seem to be lacking power and the song, any true direction. Resembling a lullaby, I just hoped this simplicity was a part of the style for the song and not her overall styling for the album. *Missing Dialogue*, however, soon had me changing my mind, opening with piano and soon filtering in vocals that are this time less wistful and sweeping and more grounded and power-laden. As we reach the centre section of this song therefore, I am captivated. Her vocals grow in mission, in stance and in tone. *On Your Own* has this character of its own that really embodies a new personality in Ange's music and by the time you've heard the first three songs, you've heard three different dimensions of her music. This continues throughout the album, offering variety, personality, charisma and passion and embodying a myriad of issues, it feels just like opening another person's diary and entering their world. This is Ange Hardy's debut studio album and it's a real delight, if somewhat mixed bag between songs you connect with and songs that you just fail to remember. However, they all create this soft landscape full of clouds and cotton wool, and the music reduces you to a softened soul, whilst some of the songs just simply transgress into this electric and on *Refuse Sack* raggaie styled vocal styling. **LB**
www.angehardy.com

BabaJack EXERCISING DEMONS

Self-released
★★★★
This album will leave you in awe of the deep southern sound which effortlessly is played to perfection



Listening to the rich country-style