

...the new releases

Beth Nielsen Chapman

BACK TO LOVE

BNC Records CD003P

★★★★☆

Classy songs, classy vocals... in short a class album

Beth's first mainstream album in six years, *BACK TO LOVE* is a striking collection of songs that pulls together the distinctive singer-songwriter's many musical influences, including folk, country, gospel and pop. Underscoring the entire CD is a joyous sense of Christian faith (made overt on songs such as, *Hallelujah* and *Even As It All Goes By*), but the spirituality is inclusive, not heavy-handed or preachy. One track that shines as a favourite is *I Can See Me Loving You* a country song with a sweet, catchy chorus accented by its angelic background vocals. Simple and free flowing *Happiness* is lovely with its folksy guitar and subtle string accompaniment.

More Than Love is a great acoustic song with a real bouncy feel to it and some great background vocals, some nice Dobro and a real rich texture to the music. *Shadows* though, is the real standout here as it combines the rarest of sing-along-worthy melodies with a message of self-empowerment and joy-of-life passion that crosses genres and generations. Let the artistic arrangements and the brilliant vocals of *Peace* lift up your inner most thoughts with hope and peace. Beth's vocals are well complemented by some sweet and charming female vocals throughout the album while the lyrics are vibrant and uplifting. This is an album well worth hearing and fans of thought-provoking country-pop music will want to experience the relaxing atmosphere of Beth Nielsen Chapman's creative songwriting and silky vocals. **AC**

www.bethnielsenchapman.com



to draw from the latter, it's that Price much admires the music of Elizabeth Cotten. In terms of the melody employed *Skeptic's Lullaby* is an ironic title, while (the opening part of) the album title surfaces in the lyric. **AW**
<http://www.billprice.info/>

Brass Monkey HEAD OF STEAM

Topic TSCD575

★★★★

Folk veterans continue ahead at full steam



After the untimely death in 2006 of original trumpeter Howard Evans, to whom this album is dedicated, there was some doubt as to whether Brass Monkey would ever see the inside of a recording studio again. Fortunately some trial live shows and the recruitment of replacement Paul Archibald have resulted in this new release which sees the band as good as ever. As their name implies the band were, together with Home Service (with whom they shared Evans and trombonist Roger Williams), pioneers in their marrying of brass instruments to traditional songs and tunes, and in Martin Carthy and John Kirkpatrick they also boasted two of the giants of the English folk scene.

Their *modus operandi* remains much the same as it ever was, with brass-heavy instrumentals mixed with songs from Carthy and Kirkpatrick. For some the brass may be a little too dominant, with Carthy's guitar in particular barely heard, but the energy and sheer oomph of the performances transcend all doubts. The band's take on *The Trees They Do Grow High* and in particular the closing and poignant epic *Nelson, The Fallen Hero/The Death Of Nelson* are undoubtedly highlights but the rollicking *Bold Archer/Dear Dicky* and *The Press Gang* are not far behind. The almost casual deployment of levels of ability that frequently leave the jaw hanging is evident throughout and everything is approached with sensitivity but never undue reverence, but rather 'meet you at the end' joie de vivre.

Detailed sleeve notes from Kirkpatrick and Carthy covering the songs' origins and provenance

complete a fine package that show a band fit to stand next to any other currently working and ahead of most. **JS**
www.topicrecords.co.uk

Colin Pollock LONG GONE SELF-RELEASED

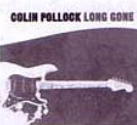
★

Colin Pollock has all the right ingredients but doesn't manage to get the mix right

Glaswegian guitarist Colin Pollock's musical interest started around the age of ten, when he first heard The Birdie Song played on the accordion local musician Jimmy 'Fairy' Fairweather. Soon after, having noticed the spark of desire in her little boy's eyes, his mother treated him to his own accordion. At 16, his musical taste changed. He developed a flavour for rock and roll, prompting his father to give him a stratocaster. The simple gift would prove to be life changing. Pollock honed his skills and wrote his first demo, *Small Town*. After receiving praise, he released an EP in 2003 entitled *THE DEVIL MAY CARE*. Garnering further praise for the project, it is surprising that Pollock waited a further six years to unleash his debut album *LONG GONE*.

Sadly, *LONG GONE* fails to live up to the wait. Pollock is without doubt a talented guitarist and vocalist, yet his bland offering barely warrants a listen. It's *A Drag*, the album's only redeeming feature is demonstration that when focused Pollock can write a devastatingly glorious ballad. However, given that *LONG GONE* is chock-a-block full of other insipidly boring and instantly forgettable ballads, Pollock could have simply chanced upon the magic formula. Caribbean Bound verges on the inspired, but the languid longing never fully sets sails.

Pollock isn't entirely non-experimental. Can Joe Play The Banjo and The Gold Digger Gets It see a change of tack, moving everything upbeat with mixed results. Whilst Can Joe Play The Banjo is a shambolic mess, The Gold Digger Gets It has an infectious beat which finally adds some life into the lacklustre collection.



LONG GONE has taken six years to produce yet is bitterly disappointing. Pollock's lilting vocal and consummate plucking should have produced an exciting album to talk about. Instead what he delivers is bland and forgettable. This copy of his collection is already *LONG GONE* on its way to the charity shop.

JW

www.colinpollock.com
www.myspace.com/colinpollock

Dan Krikorian COLORS AND CHORDS

★★★

Folk rock Krikorian style

COLORS AND CHORDS is

Orange County-based Dan Krikorian's sophomore album. He co-produced the ten-song disc with I See Hawks in L.A. drummer Shawn Nourse. Recorded at Chun King Studios in Los Angeles, the session players include guitarist Bob Boulding of the Young Dubliners, bassist Taras Prodaniuk, and keyboard player Carl Byron.

An athlete during his high school and university years—basketball, football, volleyball and track—Dan is a business and psychology graduate whose secret passion has always been music. A few years ago while living here as an exchange student, Dan made his public debut on the corner of Oxford Street in the City of Westminster. That explains why his debut album, released during 2008, was titled *OXFORD STREET*.

Dan penned all the songs on *COLORS AND CHORDS*, and as a songwriter he has been compared to Josh Ritter. While he may dabble in the same marriage of folk and rock rhythms, based on the contents of *COLORS AND CHORDS* he has a ways to go if he is to emulate the man from Moscow, Idaho. That said, the wistful *Sidewalks/Mary Jones* comes close, although a very fine line separates invention from impersonation. **AW**
<http://dankrikorian.com/>
<http://www.myspace.com/dankrikorianmusic>

Honey Don't HONEY DON'T

2Dolla Reccas 884501 162913

★★★

Decent debut from American



stringband group

American Stringband music may be the least 'hip' sub-genre—despite being culled

from Americana, which is arguably more favoured from 'serious' music affiliates—but it is undeniably atmospheric, especially when it is done well, as it is from *HONEY DON'T*. Here, on their 2Dolla Reccas debut, they premier their sound and do a decent job of showcasing something fresh—and, to fans of modern country—something seemingly brand new. In a generous thirteen-track offering, *HONEY DON'T* serves up stellar performances on fine self-written originals such as *Talk to Me Tennessee*, *You Can't Get Your Kicks On Route 66* and *The Cuckoo*. Although not as strong as other instrumentation-driven albums from bluegrass artists, the band's eponymous debut exemplifies what they can bring to the musical table. **DJ**
http://musicisere.com/labels/2_Dolla_Reccas



J. D. Souther RAIN

Slow Curve Records

★★★

John David live on the cusp of turning 65

On October 14, 2008 former Southern California country-rock pioneer John David Souther ended an almost quarter of a century silence with the release of his fifth solo album *IF THE WORLD WAS YOU*. His latest release is the seven-song *RAIN* EP recorded in concert at Nashville's Belcourt Theatre on March 4, 2009, and already available as download only (c/w artwork). On four songs—those that hail from the jazz-textured *IF THE WORLD WAS YOU*—John David is accompanied by Chris Walters (piano), Jim Mayer (bass) and Jim White (drums) augmented by the brass section of Jeff Coffin (tenor sax) and Rod McGaha (trumpet).

Souther opens with the almost Middle Eastern sounding title song, moves on with the jazzy *A Chorus Of Your Own* and follows with *Journey Down The Nile* replete with a Latin/Middle Eastern influenced melody and a quasi-Biblical lyric. *New Kid In Town*, penned by Souther in collaboration with Don Henley and Glenn Frey of the Eagles, appeared on that band's 1976 album *HOTEL CALIFORNIA*. When released as a single, it peaked at number one on the Billboard Pop Chart the following February and the recording subsequently scored a Best Arrangement for Voices Grammy. This is the first occasion that Souther has officially released the song, and *RAIN* features a touching voice and guitar rendition.

On the wistful *Silver Blue*, from his 1976 album *BLACK ROSE*, Souther is accompanied by Walters, and on the

