

## Melonie Cannon *And the Wheels Turn*

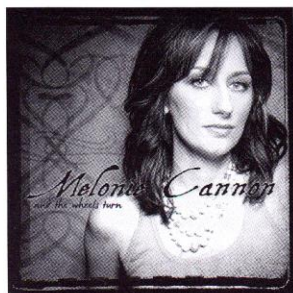
Rural Rhythm Records RHY-1036

★★★★☆

*More than just another record ... an emotional listening experience*

Melonie Cannon is the daughter of famed Nashville producer/songwriter Buddy Cannon. Her father has worked with the likes of Kenny Chesney, Reba McEntire, Sammy Kershaw, Sara Evans, Chely Wright and Vern Gosdin. It is the influence of Gosdin you can hear on this second album by Melonie, rather than Chesney, McEntire or Evans. That should come as no surprise as young Melonie sat at the feet of the 'Voice' in the late 1980s when he enjoyed his biggest country hits and even got to sing back-up vocals on some of his recordings. While country music is a big part of this album, other influences manage to wrangle their way into mix and keep the album from becoming cliché. There's a heavy bluegrass vibe, as to be expected, as Ronnie Bowman shares production with Buddy Cannon and such musicians as Adam Steffey, Ricky Skaggs, Randy Kohrs, Aubrey Haynie, Dan Tyminski, Tim Stafford and Wyatt Rice are all featured. But there's also shades of gospel, honky-tonk and good ol' fashioned traditional country.

After a couple of weeks of listening, this record still blows me away so much, it's taken me a while before I could write the review. With the parade of new female country artists coming out in Nashville now, Melonie wins the prize. She sings with the control of Chet Atkins and the emotion of Jerry Douglas. The ballads twang and jangle in all the right places and you can feel the heartache oozing out of the tunes. *Cactus in a Coffee Can*, for example, is a tear-jerker of a tune that probably made the band cry while they were recording it. *The Day Before You* really touches me, a great slow country ballad. Her version of *Set 'Em Up Joe* sounds like the song belongs to her. *Dark Shadows* is an mid-tempo bluegrass tune with some awesome mandolin, Dobro and fiddle. *Send A Little Love* is a very slow emotive song that takes me away, the last verse talks about the Lord. *I Call It Gone* is a beautiful mid tempo kiss-off song with great imagery. Haynie's fiddle is just haunting and Kohrs is incredible on Dobro. She duets with Willie Nelson on *Back To Earth*—a match-up made in heaven, and *It's All Right There* is plainly autobiographical and speaks volumes about Melonie Cannon. It's so great to see an album like this released, but why is it not on a major—have those Nashville executives got cloth ears? **AC**

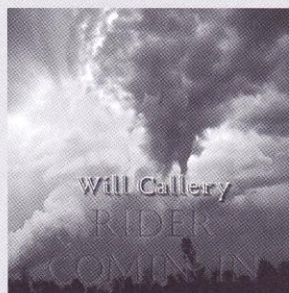


With his keening Bowie gurgle still unaffected by the liquor and nicotine and perhaps invigorated by a return to native soil, this is rockier in parts than past outings. Glam-tinged as ever (note the 1970s-style logo) it remains identifiably Kusworth, seeing no recourse to remove tracks like *Dead Flowers*, T-Rex's *Raw Ramp* and Mott The Hoople's *I Wish I Was Your Mother* from the critical list. Thus, it's the faded sheets, ragged bed-sit glamour and more squandered dreams

than can be counted in many a casual flicker of cigarette ends of *Running After You*, the bedraggled country-rock of *Into My Eyes*, lovely, dank Ronnie Lane splendour of *Hollywood* and haunting, hollow-eyed closer *Not Sent To Hurt You* that prop up this album, more than the garrulous rockin' rug-cutters like *Silver Blades* that references the New York Dolls *Jetboy*. Though ardent Dave-adherents may be slightly disconcerted at the toes occasionally dipped into the everyman anthems of

an Embrace—particularly on lumpy denim stodge-rock of *Sherry High*—be not disarmed as such caresses are coincidental skin-deep similarities left lonely on the larder shelf by the stark prowess of Kusworth's kitchen sink fables, namely adorable opener *For All The Perfect People* that signs off and salvages the Stones' *Salt Of The Earth* from the afterthought it was, while *Someone Else's Shoes* like a long lost errant sister to the Jacobites' classic *Shame For The Angels*.

As with Mulholland, there's a 2CD deluxe edition of out-takes and alternate mixes that also contains a curiously essential *Where Do You Go To My Lovely?* Mixing in the riff from Mott's *All Young The Dudes* it's a pristine example of song finding an artist in the wilderness. As with the regrets chased like an ambitious bridesmaid grasping for the bouquet at her sister's third wedding, here lies a pair to prioritise. **SG**



## Will Callery *Rider Comin' In*

Feats Records

★★★★

*The longest gap between first and second album?*

Over three decades after his ten-song Columbia Lone Star released self-titled debut—well, BILL CALLERY—and following close on two decades away from the music business, felling timber and marvelling at God's creation in America's north western states, Callery returns with his sophomore set. Recorded at the Zone in Dripping Springs (just west of Austin) and co-produced with Joe Forlini (electric guitar), the 'local' session players include Greg Lowry (lap steel, Dobro), Ted Sweeney (bass) and Eddy Cantu (drums), while there's

vocal assistance from T. Gosney Thornton and Jerry Jeff Walker.

In the liner booklet, preceding *The Great Divide* lyric, there's a footnote that relates the song was written and produced by Will for the Jamie Oldaker/Craig Hillis organised Welcome Home Project that honours America's war veterans. The opening track here, it was included on Vol. 1 of the recently released VOICES OF A GRATEFUL NATION compilations. Will's father, a B17 pilot, died during WWII prior to Will's birth, and in the second verse he sings: 'My father lies in Arlington, my great grandfather too, The lustre of their graves shines through.' In subsequent verses Callery reflects on his daughter's inherited genes 'Through God given beauty, there's a warrior deep inside, She knows full well some of her loved ones fell.'

Prior to hearing it, I mused that *Rider Comin' In* was probably an autobiographical tale relating Callery's return to the music business. Rather, the four verses (and chorus) are saturated with fire and brimstone apocalyptic Biblical references: 'I can see the keys of death and hell, Hanging on the belt of this rider' and 'I see a woman in the wilderness, Riding on a scarlet beast-like haint, Decked out in filthy lucre and she is drunk, On the blood of the saints.' This 'judgement day is coming' infused lyric sets the tone for much of the rest of this collection. Having, in the opening line, addressed '...the rulers of this Earth,' the *Rider Comin' In* lyric culminates with: 'Now they've come face to face with the Truth, But they chose to believe a liar.' The question arises, what's the identity of the latter?

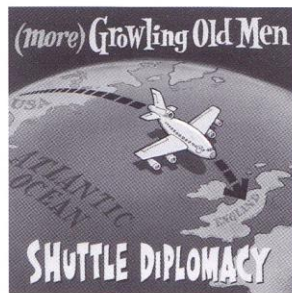
*Unseen Hands*, penned by Canadian Danny Brooks, closes with: 'From the Monarchy to the White House trickery abounds, From our Founding Fathers to where we all stand now' then delivers the KO punch: 'Wolves have come in sheep's clothing a cup of violence in their hand, All in the name of peace for the luciferian plan.' Decades ago covered by Jerry Jeff Walker and Willie Nelson, Callery has finally recorded what is his best known



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number, *Hands On The Wheel*. Here, on this love song, Will and Jacky Jack share the vocal.

Other Callery originals here, which he delivers vocally with a gravelly growl (way deeper than his tone three decades back), include *Root Of Jesse*, the slow blues flavoured *Dust*, the finger-picked acoustic guitar driven *Hearts Of Stone* and *Song of the Roses* wherein Callery remembers/memorialises his ancestors. The penultimate *These Last Days* cautions of impending Armageddon, as does the closing cut *The Kingdom Of God*. Play this CD on a computer and the musician credit is displayed as William Woodard Callery. William Woodard was Will's father, John Callery his stepfather. **AW**



### (more) Growling Old Men *Shuttle Diplomacy*

Get Real Records and Snake River Records SRR-121

★★★★☆

*Debut album full of original material that finds its influences from the Louvin Brothers and Chris Thile which is sure to get the toes tapping and the head nodding.*

Thanks to John Wirtz, the organiser of the Didmarton Bluegrass Festival, the combination of two bands from opposite sides of the Atlantic form a bluegrass explosion that is sure to blow anyone's mind. Leon Hunt (5-string banjo) and Dom Harrison (bass/guitar) from the UK along with Ben Winship (mandolin/vocals) and John Lowell (guitar/vocals) from the USA were bought together by Wirtz to play at Didmarton in 2006 and apparently they went down like a house on fire. Judging by this album, you can see why.

Easy strumming on the guitar introduces *Georgia*

*Buck*. The very peaceful mood that this picking, along with harmonica, mandolin and banjo, is simply beautiful that springs to mind the pioneers of country music. Imaginations of playing this on the front porch of a Kentuckian home come to mind. Its arrangement is simple, especially by the guitar picking, but all pick so well together that despite its simplicity it comes across as a tune that is played by some very talented people. On *Bodum Hunt's* ability to play with the best of them is certainly evident that what we have here is someone at the top of their game. But hey, Hunt isn't the only one contributing towards this truly great tune. Being an instrumental, all band members come together to create a very-mellow tune that if turned up a notch would have been too much to handle. What this demonstrates is that they know what works well and at no point do they begin to brag of their talents. The humorous *Gonna Quit Drinkin'* is sure to raise a smile. A mixture of smooth banjo with grooving picking on guitar that even includes mouth string, *Gonna Quit Drinkin'* is the album's humour song. It's quite a simply sung and played song but due to the musical competence of this band they make it sound a lot higher in quality.

Before listening to this album, I was not familiar with the work of (more) Growling Old Men but thanks to reviewing this album I am a certified fan. SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY is evidence that despite the distance between where each member of the band live, the pleasure and respect for their music they play is so evident that a few miles living apart won't stop them from producing a great album such as this, and I hope that they will collaborate more on future albums. **RH**

### Bruce Robison *The New World*

Premium Records

★★★★

*Favourite Texas singer-songwriter returns with another inspired set*

Following last year's mini collection *IT CAME FROM SAN*

### Jim Rooney & Rooney's Irregulars *Farewell to the Tracks*

JRP Records JRP004

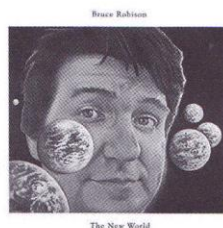
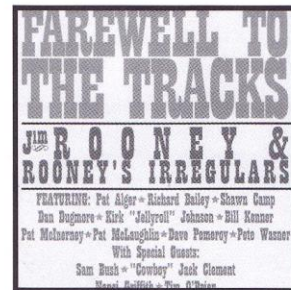
★★★★☆

*Good ol' country boys just playing music—what a thought!*

This my friends is how they used to make records in Nashville: Ace musicians given the freedom to play, singers allowed to sing as nature intended with a raw edge not smoothed out by the dreaded Pro-tools, and a production and sound not geared up to please the cloth ears of some myopic radio programmer sitting in a high-rise office block with no idea about the soul of music, only the ringing chimes of rising ad revenues. More than 20 years—and twice as many albums produced—since he moved to Nashville, veteran producer Jim Rooney has reunited with 'Cowboy' Jack Clement, engineer Mark Miller and a whole host of talented singers and musicians including Pat Alger, Shawn Camp, Dan Dugmore, Tim O'Brien, Nanci Griffith, Sam Bush, Pete Wasner, Pat McLaughlin and Dave Pomeroy, a team that has yielded some of country music's most enduring work.

The 'Tracks' in the album title is Jack's Tracks, the legendary Music Row studio originally owned by Jack Clement but for many years run by Allen Reynolds. This pair were among the key contributors to Nashville's vibrant music scene during the late 1960s and 1970s through to the 1980s working with such artists as Charley Pride, Don Williams, Crystal Gayle, Kathy Mattea and Garth Brooks. The studio was closed down almost two years ago and just before it was shuttered, Rooney and his merry band of like-minded and free-wheeling musicians spent a day recording this album. As much as anything it was more a 'jam' session rather than a recording date. This really hits home with the closing rendition of the Stones' *No Expectations*. Each musician takes a solo in turn, very much off the cuff, so that you have Dan Dugmore cutting loose on his pedal steel the way he used to out on the West Coast, alongside great mandolin, piano, fiddle, harmonica and electric guitar solos helped along by a cooking rhythm section.

All this and a mandolin-laced, back-porch version of *Wrong Road Again*, a funky workout of *Ready For the Time To Get Better*, a driving Pat McLaughlin song *Baby Ain't Got No Home* a magical duet between Alger and Griffith on *Goin' Gone*. The wide-ranging musical dialogue between these talented players incorporates bluegrass, folk, country and rock elements. The completion of *FAREWELL TO THE TRACKS* is the end of a creative and technical odyssey that began with the legendary JMI Records way back in 1972. I believe this is what is called going out in a blaze of glory. **AC**



ANTONIO, Austin, Texas based Bandera bred hit songwriter Bruce Robison returns with his first full album—on his own Premium Records label—since *ELEVEN STORIES* his 2006 outing on the short-lived Kerrville, Texas imprint Sustain Records.

On this ten song collection Robison assumes a number of intriguing musical disguises, so it's little wonder that his songs have in the past attracted chart acts such as Faith Hill & Tim McGraw, George Strait and the Dixie Chicks. A funky beat underpins album opener *The Hammer*, while, propelled by Andrew Nafziger's banjo, Mickey Rafael's harmonica and Paul English's snare drum, the bluegrass flavoured *Only* is a wordy tour de force wherein the song title references the girl that the narrator finally settled down with. *Bad Girl Blues* paints the portrait of a wayward small town run-around, who sums up