

Trent is singing just after this has occurred is *Calvary Mountains*. With a threatening sound which stays long in the memory after first hearing, it is listening to this song that you might believe Trent is the type of person who could, at the flick of a switch, bludgeon you with his guitar just after playing a superb chord. Either way, what a song and superb album this most definitely is.

I admit this might not appeal to those who like their music sounding as though they've just taken two anti-depressants, but to those who like their music a tad on the morbid yet sublime side then this is just the ticket. **RH**  
www.myspace.com/skeletonjive

#### Allen Karl MY FINAL ROSE

Self-released  
★★

*The latest album from 'the good guy in the black hat'*

This album represents the ultimate in a reviewer's nightmare! To be honest, I had never heard of Allen Karl before, but reading the extensive liner notes he has had a long career in American country music and comes across as the ultimate 'nice' guy. It is a solid country recording with plenty of fiddle, mandolin, steel guitar backing and is a good selection of new and well-known country songs. The problem is that Allen's singing is in my opinion uninspiring. When you could listen to the original versions of such classics as *You're The Reason, Tonight Carmen* and *Put Another Log On The Fire* you really wouldn't want to listen to Allen's rather lacklustre versions. It's just all rather bland at best. **DB**  
http://www.allenkarlproductionsllc.com/

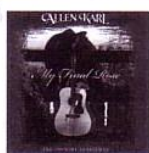
#### Warblefly TENERIFE TO DOVER

Self-Released  
WARB03CD  
★★★★☆

*Sticks two fingers up at the establishment and says with a glass of beer in their hand that they'll play how they damn well like*

Amazingly without a record company, this band is a prime example that you do not need corporate management to help you release an outstanding album. This is actually their fourth album, and what an achievement it is.

It has to be said that deep influences from the Pogues certainly appear in Warblefly's music but it sounds as though Shane McGowan and co have been let loose in the local brewery and were allowed to take a wide range of narcotics with them due to the frenetic quality of this band's playing ability. Although the opening few moments of *Cheesy Bits* sound romantic, these thoughts are soon eradicated due to the track progressing into some frenetic playing which is just outstanding. A purely instrumental track, this sounds



#### Various Artists WHAT'S KICKIN' VOL 4

Stove Pony Records wcmf006  
★★★★★

*Eclectic and awesome collection of some of the greatest bands you might not have heard before*

This is a collection of nineteen bands and artists who have come together in unison and put their voice on record in honour of the country, rock and roll and Americana club What's Cookin', that is based in Leytonstone, London. Having heard of only Mr Plow, I was pleasantly surprised and in fact impressed by the line-up found on this album as an exquisite sound is created on each and every song.

The best, and by far, finest song on the album is *No Home, No Place To Pillow My Head* by the Henry Brothers. An old-timey sound certainly penetrates this song which has the magnificent ability to transport you to the time of Depression-hit America. It is that effective that you expect Mother Maybelle to appear at some point. Another damn fine song is *Louise* by Timothy Victor's Folk Orchestra. Changing beat and tone on many occasions, it too sounds like a song taken from another time. Perfect for the Louisiana Hayride or not, it can never be taken away from this band that they are responsible for creating a tune of pure brilliance. Wolf People's *Mercy II* is exactly the opposite of the two previously mentioned songs, as this song seems to bring together New Orleans blues with Philadelphia funk in a sound that is full of life and vitality. This merging of musical genres seems mighty fine to listen to, and what a spectacle it would be to see this live.

This Leytonstone club really has something special here. Such bands and artists who frequent the stage really do know how to please their audience, and if their live performances are anything like the ones captured on this album then those gigs should not be missed. **RH**  
www.whatscookin.co.uk

quite like to Dubliners but played after the band ingested something hallucinogenic. *Warblefly in my Beer* begins quite upbeat and classy and contains lyrics ideal to sing along to whilst drinking a whisky or two. Although not having seen them live, I'm sure that the crowd will enjoy this immensely as such an occasion must be quite stupendous.

Their fourth album and still not signed? I do wonder sometimes and question why those in charge of running record companies refuse to acknowledge a band such as Warblefly, as they really are missing a golden opportunity to work with certified geniuses. Roll on the next album! **RH**  
www.warblefly.co.uk  
www.myspace.com/warblefly

#### Allison Moorer CROWS

Rykodisc  
★★★☆☆

*Paint it black. Thirteen mostly lyrically dark songs*

CROWS, Moorer's Rykodisc debut and overall her eighth solo recording, was produced by R.S. Field (Buddy Guy, John Mayall). A thirteen track collection, it features one dozen Moorer originals, and was recorded in four days at the House of David Studio in Nashville. Intense in the extreme, album opener *Abalone Sky* includes the lines: 'I am on my knees, Lead me to the ledge and let me, Dangle from a limb.' The ensuing *Goodbye To The Ground* features a similar: 'end of their tether' narration, while on occasions Joe McMahon's distorted electric guitar clashes with the percussion driven melody. Like many of Moorer's melodies, it's not one that you'll subconsciously find yourself humming any time soon. Five tracks in, lost love is explored in the Moorer-penned big ballad *Should I Be Concerned*.

*Easy In The Summertime* works as an upbeat recollection of her Alabama upbringing and acts as perfect counterpoint to the self-explanatory *The Stars & I (Mama's Song)* which follows. The daughter of a bandleader father and a music

teacher mother, the former title includes mention (though not by name) of her older sister, country performer Shelby Lynne Moorer. The foregoing pairing form the optimistic heartbeat of CROWS, and are followed by further pessimistic offerings—I guess some folks will peg them as melancholic—such as *Still This Side Of Gone* and *Sorrow (Don't Come Around)*. The penultimate track (pretty much another self-explanatory title) is Field's composition *It's Gonna Feel Good (When It Stops Hurting)*. **AW**  
http://www.allisonmoorer.com

#### Bray Vista LET IT RIDE

BVCD09001  
★★★★★

*Classic but timeless country with a country-rock vibe that is more traditional than today's country mainstream*

Don't let the fact that this nine-piece country outfit comes from Ireland put you off. Dispel any thoughts of O'Donnell, Kirwan or even Big Tom. Bray Vista lean more toward alternative country as they fuse in many rock style elements with melodies that are pure country creating a hard-hitting and fully enjoyable listen. They are many a mile removed from today's Nashville country mainstream. A brief description might be somewhere along the lines of the mixed-up genes of Merle Haggard, Gram Parsons, Emmylou Harris and John Prine. Lead singer Neil Tobin, who's also the main songwriter, has that same world-weary gruff vocals of prime time Prine. When you add the harmonies of Alison Byrne along with an instrumental combination of pedal steel, accordion, banjo, mandolin, fiddle, piano, organ and various guitars you have something rather special. Oh and did I almost forget to mention that co-producer is one Jim Lauderdale, along with Leo Pearson (Elvis Costello, Christy Moore, U2, etc).

The dozen songs explore the time-honoured traditions of country music—unrequited love, barrooms,

splitting up, drinking—themes that have almost become extinct in today's country mainstream. *Love Untold* is a song that you'd swear was the classic that Prine didn't write. It's about the shy guy who can't quite bring himself to tell the woman he loves just how he feels. The track has a smooth and flowing beat, strong and emotive vocals, and a charming honky-tonk vibe giving this catchy tune its delightful and attractive appeal. Tobin and Byrne share superb vocals on *This Time Is The First Time* as their expressions and delivery of the thoughtful, well written lyrics blend in wonderful uniformity. Byrne's lead vocals are strong on *If It's Alright*, with well blended harmonies, guitars that are driving and rhythmic and a country style piano to play it out.

LET IT RIDE is perfect for the fan that is just looking for some down home country music with catchy lyrics and toe tapping beats. But in fact it's a whole lot more than that and overall it has all the elements of a great alternative country album. It should be played to death on the Bob Harris show and Bray Vista should close this year's Americana Festival in Newark and be invited to appear at Nashville's Americana convention. Sadly, they're too country for the CMA! **AC**  
www.brayvista.com

#### Charlotte Ryerson MOTH AROUND THE MOON

Self-released  
★★★★★

*Texas songbird takes flight to deliver a beautifully crafted gem*

The wonderful thing about the independent singer-songwriter, and the internet, is that occasionally one stumbles across an artist who is really special. Texas-based Charlotte Ryerson falls comfortably into this category. This album is a labour of love; from the beautifully illustrated presentation pack/booklet, featuring the artwork of Alana Hilpert, through to the music itself. Charlotte's biggest gift is her ability to convey her innermost thoughts

