

MAVERICK

CD REVIEWS - THE NEW RELEASES

but I couldn't spot the affiliation with the previous two songs in the 'suite'.

Suite II: Night Light, evokes memories of Eddi Reader as Krista links three lovely evening-based love songs together, with *Dazzling* being particularly delightful.

The three songs that comprise Suite III: Madness of Love are spectacularly dark and brooding with the vocals taking on a sharp edge over some aggressive acoustic guitar. The best track on CHOCOLATE PAPER SUITES is here—*Middle of a Breakdown* with its repeated refrain: 'I need another cup of coffee and a cigarette' which quickly becomes a mantra and one that anyone in that position can subscribe to.

Suite IV: By Any Other Name takes us into a young woman's very introspective lovelorn mind and may not have been meant for male ears, but on *Small Things* the sentiment could just as easily apply to a man with a broken heart. The album ends with Suite V: Darwin Songhouse; which appears to just be three songs that just didn't fit in elsewhere on the album but are all really good in their own right. On the live track *Clock of the World* Krista shares the vocals with three other young ladies and the harmonies are absolutely spellbinding.

CHOCOLATE PAPER SUITES doesn't quite live up to the sum total of the individual parts and separating the songs into 'suites' may be perceived as pretentious in some circles, but I certainly intend to follow Krista Dettor's career with great interest. **Alan Harrison**
www.kristadettor.com

Laura Roppe I'M STILL HERE

Independent
★★★★★
Here's a record that is a celebration of life...



Many of our regular readers would have heard of Laura Roppe, when I wrote a feature on her in the November 2009 issue of *Maverick*. I'M STILL HERE is Laura's second album following *GIRL LIKE THIS*, and provides the second part of her life story. Diagnosed with breast cancer in October 2008, just after signing a record contract and having already released *GIRL LIKE THIS*, all work on promoting the album came to a halt and so I'M STILL HERE is Laura's one chance to really say what was going on at that time in her life. I'M STILL HERE is actually a tattoo she had done on the day of getting the all clear from the doctors.

The album itself is actually very fun loving, very celebratory and although there are undertones of darkness, the majority of the content is a celebration of life. Songs such as *Daddy's Little Angels* about the connection between a father and his daughters and his threatening behaviour towards boys is a wonderful narrative, alongside *Butterfly Girl* which is a harmonious track full of sentimentality and beautiful lyrical content. Laura's vocals harbour that country twang,

while the album content embraces a hint of pop that makes the sound more accessible, while exploring every other music genre. *Heart Inside Your Palm* is a lot more free and fun loving than the majority of songs on her last release and there's this feeling that she's just thrown her head back, flung away all worries and dug into some wonderful lyrical content. Following this is *Little Stick Of Dynamite* which comes across as an African celebratory song, with a beat and chorus that really has you hooked. Laura Roppe is an inspiration, and I'M STILL HERE is a record you don't want to miss! **LB**
www.lauraroppe.com

Livingston Taylor LAST ALASKA MOON

Coconut Bay JD350

★★★★★
Easy listening
American folk music



It's hardly fair to compare siblings to their more famous family members especially when they have released 17 albums in a 40-year career, but when their brother is folk legend James Taylor, you can't help it. College professor Livingston Taylor sounds a little like his sibling but has more in common with John Denver and George Hamilton IV. Caring in mind that this is the man who wrote *I'll Come Running*, most of the Livingston Taylor songs on *LAST ALASKA MOON* are a wee bit too twee for me, but will appeal to the type of music fan that gets excited listening to Terry Wogan on the wireless.

Personally, I did like Livingston's version of Michael Jackson's *The Girl is Mine* but couldn't help imagining it being sung on the Lulu Show with the Younger Generation dancing to it in the background. There are two really good self-penned songs on the album—*Walk Until It's Heaven* which is just as sweet as everything else but packs a sucker punch when you realise that it is actually an anti-war song. The other is the melancholic love song *Answer My Prayer*; which only a man 'of a certain age' could write, as Livingston pours his heart out to the one he loves at the end of her life.

Albums like this are best described using words like 'luscious', 'lovely', 'smooth' and 'mellow' and there is nothing wrong with that and the world is a better place for *LAST ALASKA MOON*.

Alan Harrison
www.livtaylor.com

Lucy Billings NO OTHER ROAD

Sassy Time Records
★★★★★

Sophomore set from Northern California songwriter

Northern California-based Billings' sophomore album was recorded and



Tami René

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MAVERICK ★★★★★ "A highly accomplished album"



rick didia aimee espiritu

the TEN TON FEATHER

www.tentonfeather.com

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★★★★★★★★★

"Albums like this don't come along that often..."

wxpn 88.5 radio

"bright, melodic, rootsy, excellent vocals and hot pickin' too."

EAST BAY EXPRESS

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Bob Smith

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AVAILABLE
FROM iTUNES

"A delightful five-song set that really whetted my appetite for more"

MAVERICK

★★★★★

**Mama Rosin
BLACK ROBERT**

GutFeeling Records GF020

★★★★

Mighty Swiss Cajun-based gumbo

The idea of Cajun music from Switzerland may not set many pulses racing but the reality, at least as far as Mama Rosin are concerned, will have pulses racing so fast they're liable to burst. This trio have a take on the classic bayou sound like no other, adding a garage sensibility, pinches of calypso, reggae and jazz and stirring the whole lot into a fiery gumbo. Live they're incendiary, laying down a fantastic groove that even hardened non-dancers find it impossible to resist. Capturing this sort of energy and passion on a studio recording is always difficult and on this, their third album, it doesn't quite come across throughout but only comes across in flashes. But what flashes they are.

Two tracks form the album centrepiece. The sultry *Les Cuisines de L'Enfer* slowly builds into an intense, heavy and powerful groove while *Move Your Popo* is fast and furious, raw and ragged. The whole album was recorded 'as live' but it's really only on these two tracks that the band's potential is truly captured. That said, all things are relative and a not-quite-there Mama Rosin track is worth two of pretty much anybody else's and the likes of *Le Two Step Du Motorcycle* (based on an old Creole song) and the stripped back *Tu As Perdu Ton Chemin* (a slower pause for breath) are really very good indeed.

These guys know their music and respect its roots while taking it to places that its founders could never have dreamed of. This is a four star album with five star moments, and a mighty sound from a mighty band. **Jeremy Searle**
www.myspace.com/mamarosin



produced 'out east' by John Jennings in his Charlottesville, Virginia studio. Lucy obviously has a thing for guitarists, since Andrew Hardin produced her debut disc OPEN AIR (2006). Supporting Billings in John's Virginia studio were Mary Chapin Carpenter alumni, current and past, namely John Carroll (piano) and Robbie Magruder (drums). Other studio contributors include Lloyd Maines (pedal steel), Brent Tuit (mandolin) and Stuart Duncan (fiddle).

Billings' lyrics lean to the autobiographical. The opening number, *Let's Not And Say We Did*, recollects a phrase often used by her mother when Lucy and her siblings were youngsters, and an alternative, kinder way of saying 'No'. Last year, after losing her job as a licensing lawyer, Billings contacted Jennings and asked if he would be interested in producing her album. The job loss and what ensued, pretty much constitute the scenario that inspired the *Rear View Mirror* storyline. *Daddy's Last Drive* focuses on the passing of her father, opening as a pre-teen and closing as a worldly wise twenty-something. *My Caballo* is a fond recollection of the many times she has spent working with horses, while *You Make It Easy* explores love's possibilities.

Billings lyrics often draw on, life-changing and traumatic, personal experiences, but what's sorely lacking here is emotional vocal engagement with the events portrayed in her words. The late John Stewart in his *Mother Country* lyric wrote: 'And then the lady said that they did it,' pretty up and walking good.' The latter to me hints at rigidity rather than relaxation and that's where, vocally, for me at least, Billings and NO OTHER ROAD simply didn't register. **Arthur Wood**
http://www.beinglucy.com/

Luke Powers
HWY 100

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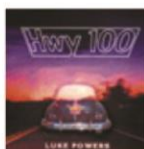
★★★★

*Knows what
it's good at and
delivers with a
gutsy spirit*

A University professor based in Nashville, Luke Powers is no ordinary singer-songwriter. Having gained rave reviews for his previous record RUNNING TO PARADISE which featured in several leading publications, this review will not differ from previous entries for this album is one worth salivating over.

With an amusing title to it, *Mechanical Monkey* is served well by a downbeat classic rock and roll groove, which takes some effort to even match it. Out of the sixteen songs which range in length, the opening *King of the Blues* is one which sets the record up very nicely indeed. This is one to get the audience up on their feet if not already doing so and get them shaking whatever tail feather possible.

Let's hear it for Luke Powers and this terrific record. With his previous aforementioned album released the year before this, I'm hoping with every inch of my body that the wait for another record is not any longer. **RH**
www.phoebeclaire.net


**Richard Craine
THE ESSENCE OF
MY LIFE**

Independent

★

*He suits a rock'n'roll
vibe but falls down
in trying to be more
of an acoustic singer-songwriter*


Richard Craine is a singer-songwriter and guitarist from Southampton, who now resides in Bristol. THE ESSENCE OF MY LIFE is a gorgeous album title, but the record just doesn't live up to the acclaim. His vocals often lose the listener especially on the title track where it comes across as much more annoying than endearing. His sound actually better the rock'n'roll vibe of *Mistrust*, *Mistreatment and Misunderstanding* with a guitar solo thrown in for good balance—it's a really powerful track and possibly the sound he should pursue more. The rest of the tracks I'm afraid really haven't appealed to me, and although I know a lot of thought and work has gone into this record, I won't be listening to it again. **Laura Bethell**
www.richardcraine.com

**Rebecca Barclay
CINNABAR**

Raven's Wings
Records RWR-1808-
CD

★★★★

Eclectic album

that rightly
demonstrates Rebecca's ability to show
all her worth on several well-crafted
songs

Stating that her roots are firmly found
in traditional folk singing, who can doubt



this claim when hearing this thirteen song release which sees Rebecca not just dipping her toe in the folk pool but several other styles to show that there is more to this artist than meets the eye.

Willie Taylor sees the banjo moving this track along at a joyous pace. The gypsy folk connotations of this song should result in it gaining airplay on respectable radio shows not just here in the UK but across the world. The wonderfully titled *Blanche Comme La Neige* uses Tadhg O' Muir's harp to much success, with Charlie Cares' penny whistle superb at this track's end. It echoes the ghosts of the past but celebrates them at the same time which can be said about many of the tunes found on this exquisite album.

A dedicated performer, Rebecca Barclay is someone who knows how to fuse the music she has heard throughout her life and construct it in such a way that it makes her music utterly spellbinding. **Russell Hill**
www.rebeccabarclay.com

**The Beautiful Losers
FOUR CORNERS OF A TINY
PLANET**

Strawberry Hill Music

★★★★

Eclectic mix of Indian influenced folk
**Various Artists
COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER: A TRIBUTE TO
LORETTA LYNN**

Columbia Records

★★★★

A timely, if slightly flawed tribute to ol' Loretta

2010 marked the 50th anniversary of Loretta Lynn's country music career. It also marked the 30th anniversary of the Oscar-winning film *Coal Miner's Daughter*. Lynn's autobiography, which inspired the film, has now been republished and issued as an e-book and as an audio book narrated by Sissy Spacek, who won an Academy Award for portraying Lynn in the film. Published originally in 1976, *Coal Miner's Daughter* was on The New York Times best seller list. Last October there was a Grammy Salute to Country Music, marked by a gala at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville and highlighted by a presentation of the Recording Academy President's Merit Award to Lynn 'in honour of her dynamic career and contributions to country music.' That same month, Eilen Jewell released *BUTCHER HOLLER: A Tribute To Loretta Lynn*, a highly original take on a dozen songs, all penned by Loretta.

Now, rather belatedly, comes this major label tribute, which for the most part is very good. We're told that Loretta chose the artists featured, and in most cases I can believe it, but I have my doubts that she would have put forward Kid Rock, Paramore or even Sheryl Crow. The biggest surprise for me was Carrie Underwood's impressive version of *You're Lookin' At Country*, I never knew the girl had this much country in her. All right, I agree, it's a note-for-note rip-off of the Loretta original, but it's soo-good. Faith Hill forsakes her insipid pop sound for a heartfelt and emotional stab at *Love Is The Foundation*. Reba McEntire returns to her Oklahoma country roots with a western swing inspired version of *If You're Not Gone Too Long* with accompaniment by the Time Jumpers. Gretchen Wilson just apes the Loretta original of *Don't Come Home A Drinkin' (With Lovin' On Your Mind)* and Steve Earle sounds totally disinterested in his duet with his missus (Allison Moorer) on *After The Fire Is Gone*. Kid Rock and the White Stripes just don't work for me, Lucinda Williams totally owns *Somebody, Somewhere*, Martina McBride and Alan Jackson are perfect for *Louisiana Woman, Mississippi Man*, and Lee Ann Womack puts her stamp on *I'm A Honky Tonk Girl*.

But why no Patty Loveless or Dwight Yoakam—just a couple of Kentuckians that have much more in common with Loretta and her music than most of the performers here. But if this collection brings the music of Loretta Lynn to a lot of younger music fans then it's done its job. But at the end of the day, you can't beat the original, so seek out those old Loretta albums. Now that's what I call country music. **Alan Cackett**

