

THE BEST GODDAMN **FREE** MAGAZINE YOU'LL EVER ...

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ENTERTAINMENT WITH ATTITUDE

# STEPHEN DUFFY

"... the Peter Fonda workout programme ..."



"Good vibes. Flotation tanks, man!"

Written around the unsettled times of the 'Astronauts' release and Creation split and undoubtedly many of them the unleashed product of reading Brum Beat "not perhaps a good thing for someone as involved in the Peter Fonda workout programme as I am"), songs of light and joy there are not. Many concern transient states of relationships. Emotional exorcisms?

"I was certainly getting a lot of stuff out. Some of the songs that didn't make it to the album are so full of despair and quite painful to listen to. If it sounds like in-between states it's because this record was the process of moving on. I changed everything. It got to the point that I had to leave Malvern, I realised sitting on a hillside writing records meant you tended to disappear up your own backside."

The album's openers, 'It Sparkles' and 'Natalie' both suggest a sense of moving on and growing up but tinged with the self-doubt that recurs throughout.

"It Sparkles' was trying to write a drug song that came out and said it. I was trying to do the Ken Kesey panoramic trip but you don't get that because it does become more personal with that and an affair tinge to it. You set the title but by the time you get to the second it's dealing with personal relationship. that

## It's all change on the Great Divide.

Forget all that has ears in the past of your brain tribulation as Lik p

your eyes and hat subsection e trials and le, because,



**LATEST**  
MIKE DAVIES  
PAUL FLOWER  
DEMOS  
REVIEWS  
and introducing ...  
**THE SPIN DOCTOR**

"When Jack Duckworth and Rolf Harris get into the charts what can you do?"

Going Stateside, often seems to be the only option left to bands suffering from the wariness of safety conscious record companies who like to see every demo applied with an air bag in case of potentially crashing profits. "I'm making no bones about it, I think that with the material that we write, we've got to go to the states. Hopefully it will be enough and that other bands have the edge. At the end of the day, it all comes down to money, which we haven't got. RunRiver - much as they'd like to have put a lot of money into doing the first album, just haven't got the resources of a big company that we definitely want to be produced by an American. We're going to New York, Nashville and London to demo our stuff, and we've got one company who are interested in us - I'm not being coy, but it's not cool to say anything at the moment. We don't want to make a

# MACH AND THE BOYS



**ROBERT EARL KEEN** the highly esteemed Texan singer-writer has just released 'A Bigger Piece Of The Sky' on Topic's Special Delivery label. He is currently on tour in the UK (though there is no Midlands date - a whole other story, no doubt!); our man **Arthur Wood** called Texas (collect?) to set the scene...

**AW:** Can I begin with the opening and closing tracks on the new album? There seems to be a worldly wise resignation in the lyric of both songs. Was that sequencing deliberate?

**REK:** You know how old movies used to begin with the curtain drawing back, and end with them closing. That calm period, and then the action all takes place - that's how this new album works. That's the idea behind it, if you like. It opens with a gentle universal lyric in 'So I Can Take My Rest' and ends with 'Paint The Town Biege', which has a real personal, yet calm sort of lyric. Then we've got all those guns and stuff!

**AW:** Let's check out those guns and stuff, 'Blow You Away' in particular, focuses on an attitude which is very prevalent in the nineties.

**REK:** I'm glad to hear you say that about society. Many people can't see that. I didn't mean it as an anti-gun law song, but something really more basic - kind of a beware song. I do think that it's kind of a scary world these days, with fourteen year olds out there blowing people away.

**AW:** Joe Ely covered 'The Road Goes On Forever' and 'Whenever Kindness Fails.'. What did you think of his versions?

**REK:** I just loved them. I'm just a huge fan of Joe's, and I thought he did a really great job. I met him at a show in Philadelphia. He heard me do the songs and decided to record them.

**AW:** The cover art for 'A Bigger Piece Of Sky' features a painting by cowboy artist Ray Strang, titled 'Slow Poke'. Do you own the original?

**REK:** No. I own a print of it. This painting had a real particular, sentimental significance for me. It was a print that was in a frame, that hung above my grandmother's bed. When we did the record and I decided on the title, I thought that I'd like to have the painting on there, because it means a lot to me. I've

## nuggets

### Random Conversation With This Month's Movers

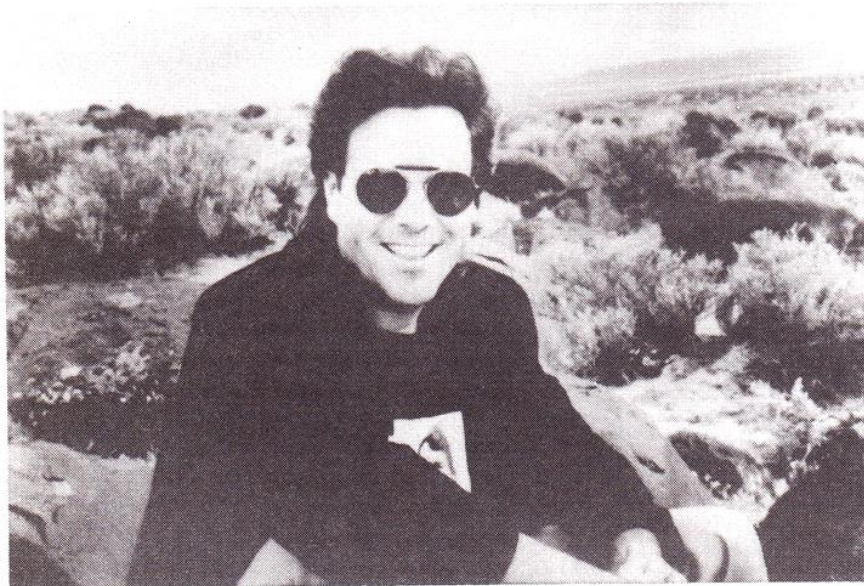
found in this whole business, that if you do what means a lot to you, you never regret it.

**AW:** Since the lyric features a blacktop county road, a swimming hole and a fishin' pole, the closing track 'Paint The Town Biege', can only be autobiographical.

**REK:** It is. To be honest, since you've visited us here, I would have hoped that you would have been able to draw that conclusion. It's a song about moving out of the city, forgetting the fast lane and mellowing out a little bit. The country life undoubtedly does that for you.



SEVEN INEBRIATED KNIGHTS, O.K., TO YOU SIX



ROBERT EARL KEEN

**THE DUBLINERS** are still going strong after 30 years together. **Charlie Hulme** finds out that as well as a British and European tour, they have a new album to celebrate the fact. Titled '30 Years A Greying', the double CD includes contributions from special guest artists, Billy Connolly, De Dannan, Hothouse Flowers and Rory Gallagher.

Band member Eamon Campbell sees the album, which he produced, as a step forward and is thrilled at the outcome of working with the above mentioned names who were, "... self picked by the Dubliners not only because we admire their talent, but thought we would enjoy working together."

I find it quite astounding that in thirty years the band has only had nine members, Barney McKenna, Joan Shehan, Ronnie Drew, Eamon Campbell and Sean Cannon, Ciaran Bourke, Bob Lynch, Jim McCann plus the late lamented Luke Kelly. Eamon has been in the band six and a half years, but for many years The Dubliners have remained true to their original musical style. They have kept their

roots, and Eamon reckons that, "... over the last few years music barriers are coming down, you do not have to be pigeon holed any more." Hence Dubliners performing with The Pogues and Shane McGowan, who they will be appearing with shortly on DEF 2. Eamon says that "... Shane is now much healthier than he was, and hoping for an Irish world cup football win so that they can make Jack Charlton Prime Minister."

As the times roll by, and the beards get longer, Eamon enthuses that he would rather "...spend my money on the dark stuff than razor blades" and pities the teetotaller because "... when he wakes up in the morning he knows the day is not going to get any better."

I asked Eamon if they would be celebrating a 40th anniversary. "Who knows," he said, "we just take it as it comes. In fact, right from when the band started, nothing was ever planned. It's probably the longest accident in the world of music."

Don't forget the gig at the Town Hall on May 5th, I'm sure Guinness tastes better at one of their gigs.





MEGASTORE

# RECORDEDdelivery

98 CORPORATION STREET, BIRMINGHAM

## JELLYFISH Spilt Milk (Charisma)

Could they possibly top 'Bellybutton'? No sweat, the 60s psychedelia magical mystery tour continues, journeying its melodic path through fields of sugar candy and patchouli pop, waiting the sweet incense of 'Smiley Smile' Beach Boys, The Beatles, Badfinger, Raspberries and even Henry Mancini as it goes. 'Hush' opens in creamy street corner a cappella, 'Sebrima, Paste And Plato' is pure They May Be Giants, 'Bye Bye Bye' courts Brecht-Weill while 'Brighter Day' closes up shop with a veritable circus parade; musical whimsy percolates throughout, but stir the cream and you'll find the lyrics hide a twist of bitters that ensures the milk curdles to good effect.

Mike Davies

## DOLORES KEANE Solid Ground (Shanachie)

It would appear that one of Keane's favourite writers is Scot, Dougie McLean. His album title track, includes the line 'you cannot own the land, the land owns you.' From the words of a contemporary Celt, to one of the most precious Native American beliefs, mankind retains innumerable common bonds. Closing this eleven cut set, is McLean's 'Until We Meet Again,' is a song of parting and declared eternal friendship.

Elsewhere, Dolores covers Nashville based writer, David Mallett's 'Summer of My Dreams' whilst 'The Finer Things', Steve Winwood's chart success from 1987 is given the Keane treatment, as is Kieran Halpin's 'Nothing To Show'. Dolores also reflects on her early recording career, with the traditional sounding 'I Courted A Soldier.' Two vocal contributions are included from Emmylou Harris. The first being on the tender ballad, 'Never Be The Sun'; the other, the Guy Clark/ Roger Murrah collaboration 'Immigrant Eyes'. 'Solid Ground' is already a contender for my end of year Best of... list. What does that tell you.....

Arthur Wood

## ROBERT EARL KEEN A Bigger Piece Of Sky (Special Delivery)

'A Bigger Piece Of Sky' is the album with which Keen gradu-

## PICK OF THE MONTH

TERENCE TRENT D'ARBY  
Symphony or Damn  
(The Tension Inside The Statement)  
(Columbia)

After the difficult, not to say impossible, 'Neither Fish Nor Flesh', D'Arby returns in devastating form with his ear for commercial attack clearly having fully recovered. After the operatic intro of 'Welcome To The Monastery' it slams in hard with the kicking dirtyass funk rock and raw-throated vocal of 'She Kissed Me' and by turn proceeds to be thrust-



ingly urgent, belligerently sexual, seductively sensual and coyly playful before closing in simple, nakedly emotional tones with the plaintively affecting 'Seasons' and the incredibly tender, sensitive piano ballad 'Let Her Down Easy'.

If you're looking for influence references you can sieve out Marvin Gaye, Prince, Stevie Wonder, Otis, even Lennon but you'll also find the Beach Boys surfing through the 60s choppy sex-pop of 'Penelope Please'. Or how about 'Wet Your Lips' mash-up of gospel and heavy guitar, Al Green meets Guns n Roses? Michael Jackson eat your heart out.

There's 16 tracks here and while not everything's immediate, nothing ultimately knows the meaning of the word disappointment. 'Delicate', duetting with Des'ree is firmly in the Sign Your Name vein. 'Turn The Page' is shuffle pop-soul par excellence, psychedelia fused with vintage Atlantic. 'I Still



Love You' is an uncluttered country-gospel number that would be a throwaway except you can't shake it from your mind. 'Castilian Blue' is David Lynch in a flotation tank, the brief seconds of the chorus hook summon up more grandeur of mood than others can manage over an entire album. 'Frankie & Johnny' was the title song for the Pacino movie but amazingly slipped past unnoticed by the media and unmentioned by the record company. God knows why it wasn't a single, a harkback to classic Stax it's simply brilliant.

A boundary breaking, cross-fertilised cocktail contemporary rock'n'soul that marries musical gravitas with popular appeal. Lenny Kravitz, I think you can go home now. Mike Davies

ates to the major league of modern American songwriters. 'Thinking person's' category, that is.

Subjectively world weary, 'So I Can Take My Rest' opens proceedings, and is followed by 'Whenever Kindness Fails', a song covered by Joe Ely on his album 'Love And Danger.' Where the acts of violence described in the latter lyric are passed off in a somewhat lightweight manner, there is a subjective darkness and doom contained within 'Blow You Away' and 'Here In Arkansas' which accurately focus on how we coexist in the nineties.

Keen freely admits that as a youngster, he held that master of the gunfighter ballad, Marty Robbins, in great esteem. From that genre, comes his own 'Jesse With The Long Hair'. A modern day wrangler, on the move between jobs, reveals his state of mind in 'Crazy Cowboy Dream,' while 'Daddy Has A Buick' is the only song here to hint at Keen's early career penchant for repartee. The album title is drawn from a line in the closing cut, 'Paint The Town Biege'. For a spell during the latter half of the eighties, Robert Earl was a resident of Nashville, in the end he settled for a hideaway in the Texas

Hill Country. There's little doubt that this song draws inspiration from the experiences of that period.

While the album opens with a 'world weary' tune, it closes in triumph with a 'worldly wise' synopsis, and finds the Keen at a new zenith as a songsmith. If the view from this bigger piece of sky is anything to go by, the prospect that Keen will conquer even higher peaks is almost a certainty.

Arthur Wood

## COSY SHERIDAN 'Quietly Led' (Waterbug - Import)

Part of Sheridan's secret, is her ability to come up with melodies which are enriched with that instant hummability factor.

Cosy Sheridan is one of life's more energetic souls. In 'Too Much Time', she explores her lust for living life to the hilt, and then some. If you're searching for a let it hang out anthem for the nineties, with added humour quotient, 'The Losing Game' is your song. It lays waste to that 'you too can be a size 8 myth' which swamp the

pages of many women's magazines. The love ballad 'I'd Fall For You' which follows, is my favourite cut, while 'Sharp Objects' explores the dangers which God built into our environment. From the latter cut, the 'childproof cap on the big wide world' is one hell of a concept.

With the hymn like closing cut, 'Lullabies,' Cosy explores fond retained memories of her childhood.

Mark this one down as not to be missed.

Available on CD and cassette from Waterbug Records, P.O. Box 6605, Evanston, Illinois 60204.

Arthur Wood

## THOMAS LANG Outside Over There - A Retrospective (Dry)

I have this chum, John, who, with the late night brandy, often breaks out the Lang albums. I also know that when Lang appears at Ronnie's in Birmingham it's SRO. I've also been told by Danny Reddington that following these appearances demand for the long lost

Epic label vinyls reaches fever pitch.

For all of these folks this, nineteen track, seventy-eight minute CD is the answer to prayers. Nine cuts are from the in demand sets with the balance being culled from a later indie album, single mixes, live cuts, B-sides and the previously unissued Lang archive. But why the fuss? Well one listen won't explain; that reveals just enough to force a second listen which... it's a drip effect, Lang's music seduces with its subtle melodic insistence. He is a singer of songs, paying respect to the composition rather than hijacking it for vocal gymnastics.

Arrangements are equally tasteful with a subtle swing-groove where most would be jazzers go for the technical display.

It all makes Lang a curiosity in the current market but luckily for him the appeal is quite timeless.

Steve Morris

## VARIOUS The World Is A Wonderful Place (Hokey Pokey)

Though he may not have platinum discs and chart hits, critical opinion agrees Richard Thompson is one of the truly great songwriters. So when you get a whole album of his material performed by an assembly of some of roots most notable artists you really should take notice. This third charity compilation for disabled kids is as outstanding as its predecessors, bringing together the likes of Ron Kavana, Tom Robinson, Sally Barker, and guitar maestro Martin Simpson with songs that range from vintage classics to material as yet unrecorded by Thompson himself. There's not a weak track to be found but particular gems would have to include Christine Collister's stark a capella reading of the anti war 'How Will I Ever Be Simple Again', Iain Matthews' plaintive vocal on Plainsong's 'Galway to Graceland', former Lone Justice bassist Marvin Etzioni with his co-written 'Don't Cost Much' and an aching 'Dimming Of The Day' by the illustrious trio of Gregson, Reader and Hewardine. And who do you think's the mystery voice on the unlisted track 13?

Mike Davies

(Mail order from Hokey Pokey, PO Box 547, London SE 26 4BD, CD £10/MC £6 [or tell the record store to order from Topic Ed.]



**CHRISTINE LAVIN /  
SALLY FINGERETT /  
JULIE GOLD &  
MEGON  
McDONOUGH**  
**Life According To  
Four Bitchin' Babes  
Vol.2**  
(Philo via Topic)

The Babes are back! And in these dark days that's a truly fine and comforting thought. The original line up has been altered by the departure of Patty Larkin to solo celebrity and major label duties, with Julie Gold, composer of eighties anthem 'From A Distance', being the replacement. Sadly, and despite it being the writer's interpretation, I could have done without that song though Gold redeems herself with the closing 'Good Night, New York', a song inspired by her mother's immigration six decades back when she "sailed through the harbour of hopes and dreams". It's the opening cut, though, that's my favourite; Megon McDonough's re-recording of her own Native American influenced 'Oh Great Spirit'. This version adds a spoken coda. Christine Lavin adds a sense of fun with 'Bald Headed Men' and throws in heavenly harmonies on a cover of Brian Hyland's 'Sealed With A Kiss'. One day Lavin will be the subject of canonisation (Folk Division); her sharply focused angle on humour and debunking of modern society's fads are unique. It's the choice of subject matter in this set that's The Babes secret weapon, making it another aural pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.  
**Arthur Wood**

**PATRICK STREET**  
**All In Good Time**  
(Special Delivery / Topic)

**TAXI MAUVE**  
**Far Off Fields**  
(Keltia Musique / Topic)

Two bands proving that traditional Irish music, far from being ready for the museum, is alive and kicking forward. Patrick Street, made up of that country's most eminent pickers including Andy Irvine and Arty McGlynn deliver a set of faultlessly picked polkas, jigs and reels leavened with songs as apposite as Irvines 'A Prince Among Men', a paean to miners and more traditional material. Taxi Mauve are Brittany based but traditional Irish in sound. Perhaps not as accomplished as P. Street, though you could argue that what little technique may be missing is made up in 'edge', the band follow the same route with a composite of instrumentals and songs. None of the songs have the sting of Irvine's work for The Street, though that's not to slight them as they are more

## EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW

**STEINAR ALBRIGTSEN & TOM PACHECO**  
**Big Storm Comin'**  
(Norsk - Import)  
[soon to be available on Round Tower]

This gem arrived direct from Oslo on the morning we went to print, so it's first impressions really. Though there's enough here to suggest classic after one run through. Now I guess that Steinar's name takes pole position for domestic commercial reasons in Norway, he's a mega star there, (in fact I'm told that this album went gold there on pre-sales figures!), because it is an album of prime Pacheco material. Equally I guess that release on Round Tower will be arranged for the UK.

It may well be the Pacheco album for those who find his vocal intensity difficult to penetrate. Albrigtsen's lighter tone in the duets both leavening the sound and focussing Tom's lush melodies a little better than the writer himself.

The songs are excellent; there's a reworking of the old cut 'The Stranger' which could be a Kennedy political allegory; 'Beaches Of Rio' with it's castigation of the cohabiting of poverty and wealth ("there's a ten year old prostitute kissing a smiling old man / who could be her grandfather except he owns banks in Japan"); 'Big Storm Comin', the title tracks eerily pessimistic apocalypse now ("Cupid's arrow is a threat / in this time of approaching plague") and 'From A Window's topicality ("a child in Serbia just caught a bullet in the eye")

It's not all gloom, the above songs represent Pacheco's journalistic songwriting flair, a heartfelt observation of the ill world he travels. Other songs dwell on relationships and, in 'Grand Canyon', the stress a nomadic musical life places upon them. 'The Bottom Of My Heart' is a tale of spiritual refuelling and both 'Bury My Soul In The Sky' and 'From A Window' continue Pacheco's exploration of Native America.

Having seen Tom tuck into prime steak I'm not quite sure about the writer's concern for 'The Deer', a lament for the poor animal, written after seeing its head on a restaurant wall! Though seriously, the song's evolving imagery makes it a potent eco statement.

'Big Storm Comin' is another hugely invigorating slice of material from Pacheco, who must soon be recognised with the greats, whilst Albrigtsen's contributions provide reason to believe that Norwegian country might not be the musical equivalent of Swedish chefs!

(And Tom, if the man Spencer L. don't like it, remember 'if you asked him about music it just wouldn't mean a thing.')

**Steve Morris**

traditional Irish in feel than might be expected of Bretons!  
**Steve Morris**

**THE RIVER  
DETECTIVES**  
**Elvis Has Left the  
Building**  
(Vital)

Having parted from the Warner empire after a great debut set, the Scots duo reappear with a vengeance on an Isle Of Skye indie.

If your penchant is for great melodic songs delivered in great harmony and bedded over chiming acoustic and ringing electric guitars, then this is your kind of album. And don't let the opening paragraph lead you astray; this is no Proclaimers sounding duo, The RDs are more Everlys with

bite, a post punk Eagles, pop in a classic tradition. These guys, Sam Corry and Dan O'Neill can sing and write and they've got great taste when it comes to blending all of those elements. Get on their case today.

**Steve Morris**

**WILLIE NELSON**  
**Across The  
Borderline**  
(Columbia)

Presumably as much a project to help fund his tax bill as get-back on the right country track, whatever the motives, the fact is this is probably the best country collaboration album since George Jones invited round some friends. Nelson's cracked, dusty, emotive voice has rarely sounded better and producer Don Was has pulled

off the difficult task of making a record that's as likely to attract the contemporary roots and rock audience as the Nashville mainstream. Among the many guests, Dylan turns up to contribute and warble on new song 'Heartland', Paul Simon supplies guitar on both 'Graceland' and a stunning rendition of 'American Tune', Bonnie Raitt weighs in for 'Getting Over You' and Sinead O'Connor plays Bush to Willie's Gabriel for 'Don't Give Up', which along with '(The) Most Unoriginal Sin' and the title track make up the album's three diamonds. Not a bad start to his 6th decade.  
**Mike Davies**

**SHERMAN  
ROBERTSON**  
**I'm The Man** (Indigo)

**BOBBY MACK**  
**Say What** (Provogue)

**MICHAEL KATON**  
**Get On The Boogie  
Train** (Provogue)

Blues'n'boogie is odd stuff when locked into album form. It takes an exceptional talent to pull off the illusion. Michael Katon and Bobby Mack illuminate this point well. I have no doubt that both are white hot live performers but, in Mack's case, whilst the guitar playing is recommendable, the overall impression, despite the presence of luminaries such as

Lonnie Mack and some Nevilles, is rather flat. Katon is somewhat better with some interesting and moody arrangements, though once more the urge to experience it live overwhelms the one dimensional album.

The winner here is Sherman Robertson. Perhaps because his blues is of the 'chamber' variety. House trained sophistication of the Cray breed. In fact his laid back vocals and clean, cool guitar picking could make him a contender if young Bob's fans can be persuaded to listen.

**Steve Morris**

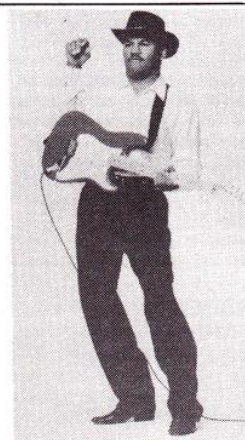
**RICHARD THOMPSON**  
**Watching The Dark**  
(Rykodisc)

A three CD box set with a 24 page booklet, this sweeps from 1969-1992 to take in virtually every aspect of Thompson's illustrious but so often overlooked career. And unlike many retrospectives, it's made immense efforts to dig out 23 rare or previously unavailable tracks (often alternate takes) to balance the straight album cullings. Essentially for the Thompson collector (though anyone looking to get a crash course in the man's genius would be well advised to invest), there's a wealth of highlights. Firstly how about three cuts from the first, shelved version of 'Shoot Out The Lights', among them Linda singing on 'The Wrong Heartbeat' a song that subsequently surfaced on the post-divorce album 'Hand of Kindness'. Then there's an ultra-rare alternate take of 'A Sailor's Life' from 'Unhalfbricking' minus Swarbrick's fiddle. Live recordings include Richard & Linda's 'A Heart Needs A Home' from 1975, a spellbinding 'Calvary Cross' from the 1983 big band tour previously only on a fan-club cassette, and an acoustic 'Jennie', recorded two years before the studio version. There's also a totally new number, 'Poor Wee Jockey Clarke', and a live 1990 recording of 'From Galway To Graceland' which has yet to appear on a Thompson studio album. Great stuff.

**Mike Davies**



**PATRICK STREET**



**SHERMAN  
ROBERTSON**