

Telling of the thoughts of a 'terrorist' or 'freedom fighter' after he or she has done whatever their cause asks of them, it is quite a haunting song which may seem too much for some to stomach. Instrumentally speaking, it is splendid with Sean's fine singing more than capable of pulling this song off. Before I Walk Away begins quite tamely, but as soon Sean gets into the vocal spirit he hits those high notes which seems to chill me right down to the soles of my shoes. This is one band I wouldn't like to cross in a dark alleyway, as their efforts seem to be quite murderous but who the hell cares when songs like these are the result of their collaboration?

Despite its relatively short length, this album is one which wipes its feet on common decency and walks over it to the land of darkness and the surreal which I for one cannot stop myself from playing continuously; a treat of an album. **RH**
www.cruefolk.com
www.myspace.com/cruefolk

Dala EVERYONE IS SOMEONE

Campus
Music/Lenz
Entertainment
★★★★☆

Lush female
harmonies
surround romantic entanglement
songs

What's in a name? As far as the Canadian duo Dala is concerned, the 'Da' is taken from end of Amanda Walther's Christian name, while the 'la' belongs to her musical partner Sheila Carabine. The girls became fast friends after meeting at band practice while attending Mary Ward Catholic Secondary School in Scarborough, Ontario. Forsaking further education they formed Dala in 2002 and signed a development deal with Big Bold Sun Music late the following year. EVERYONE IS SOMEONE is their fourth release. Blonde Amanda (acoustic guitar, piano, keyboards, mandolin) is the ethereal soprano, while brunette Sheila (acoustic guitar, piano, keyboards) is an alto. Their harmonies are to die for, and the albums THIS MOMENT IS A FLASH (2005), ANGELS AND THIEVES (2006) and WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE (2007) have, to date, earned this duo four Canadian Folk Music Award nominations.

As EVERYONE IS SOMEONE unfolds lush oohs and aahs abound, while subjectively most of their easy listening folk/pop lyrics focus on being in and out of love, and on life. The girls penned six songs with their manager Mike Roth, three more together, while Walther authored Face In The Morning. On the subject of love, the narrator in album opener Lonely Girl proffers: 'I'd rather be alone than someone you take home.' The album features two versions of Levi Blues, and the marginally longer AM Transistor Remix closes this collection. With the narrator constantly dressed in denim, the latter is a travelogue that embraces destinations near and far away. It's one of the aforementioned love songs, the bottom line lying in the repeated: 'I always come back to

you.' Alive is a testament to youthful innocence and vigour, Horses a paean to the (personal) freedom that results when love departs. I think you get the idea.

Dala's music is not a million miles adrift from that purveyed by that other Canadian duo, Madison Violet.

AW
http://www.dalagirls.com/
http://www.myspace.com/dalagirls

Dan Arborise OF TIDE AND TRAIL

Just Music TAO031

★★★★☆

Technically
brilliant
but largely
uninspiring acoustic set

Dan Arborise's second album is very much an 'if it ain't broke...' work. The trouble is it's certainly damaged if not completely broken. Arborise is an excellent acoustic guitar player, but he seems incapable of finding his own voice. Nick Drake is the primary touchstone, and songs like *Another Side Of The Sky*, *She Told Me How To Love Her* and *My Child* are almost indistinguishable from Drake's (lesser) works. The shade of John Martyn is also evident, generally on the extended instrumental sections of songs. Last time around this seemed like blatant stealing, but given this is more of the same it's possible that this is simply what Arborise does.

Aside from originality though there are two other significant strikes against him. The first is that, like too many great players, he can't resist the urge to go on just a bit too long on most of the songs here, filling the extra time with technically brilliant but uninspiring New Age-ish noodling and this is only partially alleviated by his being a bit more adventurous with his backing sounds, using some electronic effects to create washes of sound on *Feet In The Sea*, *Head In The Stars* and multi-tracking on *Cries*, which produces a fuller and more interesting effect. The second though is that the overall effect is that of background music for a 'healing' crystal shop in Glastonbury High Street: pleasant and acceptable in context but unmemorable and unlikely to trouble the wallet elsewhere.

That said, Arborise ticks a lot of boxes (organic, acoustic, thoughtful, technically superb) and for many people that will probably be enough.

JS
www.myspace.com/arborise

David Nail I'M ABOUT TO COME ALIVE

Hump Head
Records HUMP 061

★★★★☆

An impressive
album for the
artist's second attempt of success

In all likelihood, the name David Nail will be unfamiliar to most readers. Born and raised in Missouri, Nail cites two of his early influences as Glen Campbell and Vince Gill, influences which can be detected in his own vocal styling. Given an

opportunity to take up a career in baseball, Nail opted instead to pursue a career in music. His talent was soon recognised when he moved to Nashville. He got himself a deal with Mercury Nashville and, produced by Keith Stegall, (Alan Jackson), he recorded an eponymous album in 2002. This album was sent to a number of selected radio stations but when the first single, Memphis, was released, it failed to make Billboard's top 50 and both Nail and Stegall were rather unceremoniously dropped. The album was shelved and failed to get a general release.

Disillusioned, Nail turned his back on the music scene opting instead to coach a team of young baseball players. However, as happened before, music played an important role in his life and he decided to try once again. This time he managed to secure a deal with MCA Nashville for whom he recorded I'M ABOUT TO COME ALIVE in 2007. The title track, previously recorded by rock band Train in 2003, was released as a single in 2008. It peaked at number 47, and the album, scheduled for release in August 2008, was put on hold. A second single, Red Light, was released in May 2009 and peaked just outside the top 20 and so, a year after its scheduled original date of release, it is now available to the general public.

Nail has a strong, soulful voice, a low tenor, and he uses it well to wring every ounce of emotion from songs of homesickness like the opening cut, Mississippi, and the closing track, the self composed Missouri, to loser's laments like I'm About To Come Alive and Red Light. He has turned to songwriter, Scooter Carusoe for five of the eleven numbers, co-writing with him on Again, and Clouds. While Carusoe joins forces with Aimee Mayo on the wistful Strangers On A Train, one of the highlights of the album where we find Nail being joined vocally by Miranda Lambert, although, despite the claim that this is a duet, Lambert merely offers strong harmony vocals. Carusoe has collaborated with Kenny Chesney on Turning Home, another number worthy of a mention. Gary LeVox, of Rascal Flatts fame brings Summer Job Days to the table, a nostalgic backward glance at times gone by.

Among the musicians are names like Dan Dugmore, Randy Scruggs and Chuck Leavell, whose contribution on piano is noteworthy. What failed to impress, however, was the overall production by Frank Liddell and Mike Wrucke, (Miranda Lambert). Too often the musicians are found to be far too 'busy'—relentlessly so in fact, and on too many cuts the drummer is brought right up front. David Nail is a soulful singer who would almost certainly have benefited more with less clutter behind him. It will be interesting to see how his debut album is received in the weeks and months ahead. **LK**
www.davidnail.com

**Gary Curtis
CUT ME LOOSE**
LMG Music LMGM002

★★★★★

Out of this world,
spellbinding
album which
surely has the
marks of success
written all over it



Originally from the UK but now finding success in Nashville, this contemporary sounding second album by Gary Curtis keeps to its roots of including a substantial amount of traditional elements which country music fans will certainly rejoice in hearing.

It has to be said that Gary has a beautiful voice, with this ability evident on I Don't Want Us To Be. With a honky-tonk beginning, the fiddling on this track is most delightful that by no means lets down Gary's efforts on lead vocals. Like many great country tracks, Happy Hour by all means can be described as a pro-drinking song. With an awesome sound which tries to replicates the greats of this theme found so often in country music, it succeeds with the quality likely to be found on many peoples' wish-lists of tracks to catch live. Lying In Bed begins with a truly great contemporary country sound, and just seems to build from there. The track has the bonus of a 'having a good time' sound and the further benefit of it being sung by a guy who knows how to turn the heat up when requested; a treat of a track.

I always wish the best to non-American artists who try to hit the highest possible heights of country music stardom. Due to the release of this twelve track album it must surely help Gary in this pursuit. **RH**
www.garycurtis.biz
www.myspace.com/
garycurtisinformation

Grae J Wall & The Jailbirds MURDER BALLADS & GRAVEYARD BLUES

Self-Released

★★★★★

Country music the way it should
be done; raw and unadulterated
that sticks two fingers up to the
establishment

Despite it being an EP and consisting of five tracks, this release by a stupendous UK band is one which every up-and-coming country band not just from here in Britain but from across the world should sit up and take notes of about how to make a pure country album which oozes whiskey from every crevasse.

Two of the tracks on this album are traditional ones, with On The Banks of the Ohio being one of these. An amusing beginning to start proceedings, it is sung in a Hank Williams or even Merle Haggard style and plays with the lyrics that add a further comical and stylish edge to it. One track not traditional but in fact written by Grae J Wall is Dead Man's Blues. The vocals provided by the man himself which sound oddly like Waylon Jennings or Willie Nelson circa 1980 hit the spot like an aspirin for a headache and this

