

## ...the new releases

Some really good bluegrass hi-lonesome harmonies in this song. *Daddy Tried*, written by Dennis Duff, is a sad ballad about a man's faith being tested to the full by non-believers, and *Mama*, a beautiful ballad by a son who struggles to keep on right road through life but thanks to his mother's faith makes it. The band's respect for tradition is fully evident in their version of Carter Stanley's *She's More To Be Pitied*, with a fine lead vocal by Christy. The instrumental *Beat the Train*, written by Trevor Watson, allows each of the band members to shine. All in all this is a great album by a great bluegrass group. Thirteen great songs, not a throwaway in the bunch. If you are a bluegrass fan, you have to check this out. AC  
www.loueidandcarolina.com

### Louise Latham RECLAIMED

Carnelian Records  
CARCD1  
★★★★  
High quality recording from this Carmarthen-born storyteller



This 11-track debut album is a well-crafted collection of romantic, insightful, soul-searching songs. Recorded in Holland with producer Arno Guveau, with the string arrangements he has brought forth refreshed treatments to previously released material on two EPs. Louise's vocals always the centrepiece have a haunting, dramatic quality, evident on the questioning opener *Young Boy*. This is mirrored in the doll's house illustrations on the cover and sleeve notes, which reflects the warmth that the songs bring—dark yet hopeful. Playing the piano and singing was a solitary and intimate experience for her. These origins began at Royal Holloway University where she would secretly disappear to the very dark and gothic North Tower filled with pianos to write and built up a collection of songs. Describing the style of the music it's as if Beverley Craven, New York band HEM and Julia Fordham had met for morning coffee, a perfect example being the aching *I Can See It In Your Eyes* and the mellow *Bitter Blue*.

On the tender *Saint*, Rozaliya Rashkova provides the solo cello and sister Suzanne the ethereal harmony. Light beckons through the darkness on the charming and restful *Beautiful Sky*, which has commercial possibilities. On this gorgeous track love wafts like chiffon drape in the breeze and with a gentle guitar slowly fades in the evening glow. The delicate plaintive piano intro on cinematic title cut *RECLAIMED* is magical. Louise's voice is hypnotic, angelic and fragile and sends shivers up the spine, an undoubted highlight of love lost and restored. Seek out the music from this talented and delightful young lady. **AndyC**  
www.louiselatham.com

### Meet Citizen K SOMEWHERE UP NORTH

Paraply Records  
★★★★☆  
Surprisingly good album from this Swedish singer-



### Peter O'Brien with Tony Poole JUNKED CARS & BEAT UP GUITARS

Aurora AUR06  
★★★★☆

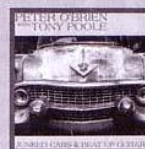
An engaging collection of reflective songs inspired by the last fifty-odd years of pursuing a passion for music...

Peter O'Brien has been one of my most noteworthy inspirations when it comes to my passion for music and writing about it. Back in the early 1970s if you wanted to find out about cult hero singer-songwriters—John Stewart, Steve Goodman, John Prine, etc—you couldn't google, you had to rely on magazines like *Let It Rock*, *Zig-Zag* and Peter's *Omaha Rainbow*. The latter magazine was inspired by John Stewart—a big hero of mine—and I guess it must have closed down more than twenty years ago. I'd not thought about Peter in as many years, so it was a shock, and quite a surprise when this album dropped through the letterbox. I didn't really know Peter—I think I met him once at a John Stewart concert in the mid-1970s—and certainly wasn't aware that he was a singer and songwriter. As I slipped this CD into the player I had no idea what to expect, but after a couple of tracks the smile on my face grew bigger and bigger as I was gradually transported back to my hey-day of music collecting—those heady days of the 1970s. I tend not to be a nostalgia freak—there's so much good music being made today to spend the rest of my years living in the past—but occasionally it's good to be reminded of 'the good old days'—and this album does just that over and over again.

It would be true to say that Peter O'Brien is not a singer-songwriter in the way that Stewart, Goodman or Prine were/are. This is his first album, and apart from a stint in a short-lived skiffle band in the late 1950s, has not played music either professionally or even as an amateur since. Peter is a great storyteller, and he weaves stories into his work—mainly reflective—as he sings about his experiences during his life-long passion for music from the mid-1950s (The Skiffle Kings, The Night Bill Haley Came To Town) through to the 1970s (Townes Van Zandt's Jacket) along the way he name-checks the Everly Brothers, Lonnie Donegan, Steve Goodman, Bob Dylan, John Stewart and several other notable musical icons. Above all, Peter O'Brien's *JUNKED CARS & BEAT UP GUITARS* is an original and compelling work that recalls 1970s singer-songwriter influences without copying them.

It would be true to say that O'Brien has seen and done it all and he impresses the listener with his natural, laid back voice as his songs capture the essence of heartfelt and well-written lyrics. The musical arrangements are down to Tony Poole (Starry Eyed & Laughing) and his guitar work is inventive, inspirational and perfectly in tune with the lyrics. O'Brien contribute acoustic guitar, Harry Arthur adds drums and harmony vocals and Cody West provides keyboard colourings. This foursome really come into their own on *Beat Up Old Guitar*, a song written from the perspective of a well-worn and travelled guitar. This song has many musical attributes which gives it character and will have you singing along in no time. Listen as the bass line provides a groovy, yet steady and solid rhythm. The vocals are straight up with clean and crisp clarity as the well-written lyrics come to life. Equally impressive is *Lost and Found* with an easy flowing tempo and wonderful harmonies that swirl playfully around the catchy melody with lyrics so natural they had to come from personal experience.

Other terrific numbers, like Bob Dylan's *Hands and Old Rivers* and *Slow Moving Trains* find O'Brien weaving words and spinning yarns with the acumen of a practised storyteller as he dashes off hooks and intriguing narratives with the ease and carelessness of one who has plenty to spare. His songs will take you to places like the Mojave Desert, Dodge City, Newport Folk Festival or to London's Dominion Theatre or Wolvercote Village Hall in the austere 1950s and his lyrics replicate these timeless adventures. Peter O'Brien is creative and his songs bring a refreshing taste of nostalgia with a wonderful style and grace. *JUNKED CARS & BEAT UP GUITARS* is a cross-generational work that owes a debt to classic singer-songwriter stylists, but is also completely right for contemporary listeners of any generation. AC  
www.starryeyedandlaughing.com



### songwriter

Housed in a card sleeve, the front cover of *SOMEWHERE UP NORTH* parodies Jackson Browne's 1972 self-titled debut recording aka *SATURATE BEFORE USING*. Thankfully the latter words don't feature in this parody, as that would have been a bridge too far. Swede Klas Qvist aka Citizen K, plays pretty much every instrument you hear on this collection. Sung in English, K's diction is impeccable. Produced by Klas and Mats-Ola Tranell, the recording runs for in excess of sixty minutes and requires focus as the listener traverses the sixteen tracks. Without mentioning names the initial songs more than tip a wink at 1960s/1970s contemporary English folk music of the pastoral persuasion, while the ever-present harmony rich vocals hint at CSN and the ilk. There's even the odd hint of Brit pop at its best, so I guess the allusion to singer-songwriter Jackson Browne fits the bill in an obtuse way.

Album opener *For Citizen A* was penned by K for girlfriend Anika Larsen, who contributes recorder, tin whistle and backing vocals on a few of the tracks. Anyone familiar with the Hans Christian Andersen children's story *The Emperor's New Clothes* will connect, smile even, at the storyline of *That Same Old Sun*. While her name isn't mentioned, the bittersweet *Some Time In September* was written within days of the 2003 murder of Anna Lindh, the then Swedish minister for foreign affairs.

*SOMEWHERE UP NORTH* features three instrumentals inbetween, and the consecutive pairing *Have You Taken Your Medicine?* and *Stitchy's Tune*, plus Citizen K employs sound effects throughout—waves lapping on the shore, thunder, rain, a clock ticking, and bird song—thereby melding these tracks into a cohesive whole. Citizen K's creation most definitely qualifies for the accolade: 'Boy that was a most pleasing musical surprise.'

AW  
http://www.myspace.com/citizenksweden  
http://www.paraplyrecords.se/

### NewFound Road SAME OLD PLACE

Rounder 11661-0609-2

★★★★

Classic bluegrass with traditional country overtones and a touch of gospel



One of the finest groups in contemporary bluegrass, NewFound Road fuses tradition with progress to create their own unique and timeless style. This is the band's second Rounder Records release, and it reveals instrumental virtuosity and impeccable vocal interplay unrivalled on today's bluegrass scene. The title track *Some Old Place* showcases the perfect blending of bluegrass and the more traditional strains of country. Tim Shelton's lead vocals

have a soulful edge, he is a very good guitarist too, mostly playing rhythm. Junior Williams (banjo) has a driving style, Joe Booher (mandolin) is a sensitive player adding subtle notes to the ensemble sound, whilst Randy Barnes (bass) underpins everything with solid playing. They are joined by guest players Justin Moses (resonator and acoustic guitar, banjo), Brandon Godman (fiddle) and co-producer Jimmy VanCleve (fiddle, vocal).

In the bluegrass world there is only so much you can do musically, but NewFound Road stretches the boundaries while all the while keeping the traditional sounds in tact. With a nod to classic honky-tonk, love gone astray, reminisces, religion and family, and through the virtuosic picking on the instrumental *Piledriver*, NewFound Road simultaneously deliver the past, present, and future of bluegrass. Throughout their sound is both vibrant and timeless. AC  
www.newfoundroad.com

### Raygun Cowboys RAYGUN COWBOYS

Stumble RCOW001

★★★★★

Awesome debut of endless greatness, say no more? Really? No, read on...

Frantically frazzled rockin' swinging from the get go from

