

CD REVIEWS THE NEW RELEASES

The Wranglers with Jimmie Dale Gilmore HEIRLOOM MUSIC

Neanderthal Records

★★★★

Gilmore delves deeper into America's rich roots music tradition

The initial pressing of Gilmore's latest album, his follow-up to COME ON BACK (2005), is housed in a thirty-six page hard-backed book. This fourteen song collection is the first release on the newly created label, Neanderthal Records, and like its aforementioned predecessor contains decades-old material. Where Gilmore's previous release contained honky-tonk country classics from the 1960s and doubled as a tribute to his late musician/scientist father from whom Jimmie Dale learned the songs, HEIRLOOM MUSIC travels further back in time and explores genre-rich American roots music composed between the 1920s and 1940s.

The Wranglers are a Bay Area six-piece (bluegrass) string band, composed of Warren Hellman (banjo, vocals), Heidi Clare (fiddle, vocals), Bill Martin (mandolin), Colleen Browne (bass, vocals), Nate Levine (guitar) and Krista Martin (fiddle). There are also a few HEIRLOOM MUSIC contributions from Flatlanders' sideman Rob Gjersoe (guitar). Venture capitalist Hellman is also the founder and benefactor of the free Hardly Strictly Bluegrass Festival which takes place annually in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park during the first weekend of October. Co-produced by Gilmore and Eric Drew Feldman (Captain Beefheart, Katell Keiney), the album was recorded in the city's Hyde Street Studios.

HEIRLOOM MUSIC opens with Tommy Duncan's *Time Changes Everything*, and while Gilmore has acknowledged that he first heard the Bob Wills & the Texas Playboys recording, for whom Duncan was vocalist, the version that Jimmie Dale became most familiar with from his late father's music collection was one made by the late Johnny Cash. It's followed by *Deep Ellum Blues*—the only traditional song here—for which Gilmore penned an arrangement. Considering the rise to prominence of the Carter Family following the legendary 1927 Bristol, Tennessee sessions, it's no surprise to find two selections from AP Carter included, namely *I'm Thinking Tonight Of My Blue Eyes* a tale of leaving, and later, *Foggy Mountain Top*.

Gilmore has stated that he became familiar with the Charlie Poole/Norman Woodliff collaboration *Leavin' Home*—a variation on the tale of Frankie and Johnnie—from the recording made by the late Mike Seeger's New Lost City Ramblers. Any exploration of roots music from between the wars would be sadly lacking without a Bill Monroe tune or, for that matter, a selection from Flatt & Scruggs, Arthel Lane 'Doc' Watson and also the Delmore Brothers, and here, respectively, the famous *Uncle Pen*, as well as *If I Should Wander Back*, *Way Downtown* and Alton Delmore's *Brown's Ferry Blues* all hit the spot. Having expeditiously explored the roots of folk, country and blues music with the Wranglers, joined vocally for a couple of verses by Hellman, Gilmore closes this collection with an entertaining yet curiously restrained rendition of *Big Rock Candy Mountain*. **Arthur Wood**
<http://www.jimmiegilmore.com/>



George Hamilton IV • IN THE HEART OF TEXAS • Heart of Texas Music HOTR 4160 • ★★☆☆

Wrong time for George to try and become a hard country singer

It's always hard for me when I have cause to criticise singers that have been amongst my favourites for years, but at the end of the day I believe that you should always be honest, however difficult that might be. I bought my first George Hamilton IV record way back in 1962 and in the ensuing years I possibly have copies of virtually every song he's ever recorded. In my humble opinion back in the mid-to-late 1960s good ol' George was one of Nashville's groundbreaking country artists. Before it was fashionable he successfully blended country and folk music, he blazed a country music trail right across Europe and has always remained adventurous in his choice of song material. But I believe that this latest album is something of a faux pax. I've always believed that there are horses for courses and sadly George's forte is not straight-down-the-middle hard-core country music. A few years ago he might well have got away with it, but now the sprightly 74-year-old just doesn't have the vocal chops to pull it off convincingly. He falls down rather embarrassingly with new versions of his own early hits such as *Before This Day Ends*, *To You And Yours* and *Abilene*. Cult Texas singer Darrell McCall adds vocals to the latter. But that still fails to raise the level above just plain ordinary.

Though not a great rendition, it is Mickey Newbury's *Poison Red Berries* that suits George's vocal styling best and the laid-back pedal steel and electric lead is simply sublime. I was really looking forward to hearing once again George's version of Michael Martin Murphey's *West Texas Highway*, it was one of my favourite recordings by him back in the early 1970s, but this updated one really does pale in comparison. Musically this is a really good album with tasteful production by Justin Trevino and sympathetic playing the cream of the Texas musicians but I have to say sorry George, I'm going to have to pass on this one and go back to the old records. **Alan Cackett** • www.heartoftexascountry.com



Jimmie Vaughan • PLAYS MORE BLUES, BALLADS & FAVORITES • Proper Records-PRPCD083 • ★★☆☆

Raw, raunchy, rocking and revitalising

Co-founder of the Fabulous Thunderbirds in the 1970s, Jimmie Vaughan has followed up his popular 2010 album *BLUES, BALLADS & FAVORITES* with *PLAYS MORE...* using the same musicians from the last album as well as the powerful vocals of Lou Ann Barton. Jimmie has chosen sixteen covers that all mean something to him, allowing him to give them all the performances they deserve.

Tracks such as *I Ain't Never*, *I'm A Love You* and the wonderful ballad *The Rains Came* all show off his great rock'n'roll vocals and throughout this CD you are also treated to some great guitar solos from this quality guitarist. Lou Ann Barton adds vocals on several tracks including a fine duet with Vaughan on *No Use Knocking* and her powerfully soaring voice is majestic on the super rock'n'roll ballad *Shake A Hand* that also includes a fine horn and rhythm section accompaniment. For fans of quality rock'n'roll this is well worth checking out. **David Knowles** • www.jimmievaughan.com



Karyn Oliver • RED DRESS • Self-release on website/i-tunes/cdbaby • ★★☆☆

Bittersweet country rock ballads from the pride of Baltimore

Sadly you can count the TV and programmes on one hand that showcase music for discerning adults, so it is going to be a long hard struggle on the road for someone as talented as Karyn Oliver to get the recognition she deserves. Karyn appears to have written all 13 songs herself and that will hold her in good stead, as several are very good indeed; especially *Drag Your Angel Up*, *Heartbreak in Progress* and *Be With You* but the best two songs on the album are the piano led tear-jerker *Candy Dish* and the rockier *Happy Hour* which both could be Tift Merritt songs if I didn't know any better.

The subject matter is as you would expect—'broken love affairs', 'misplaced ideals' and the perennial 'men that should know better'; but Karyn writes from the heart and makes you believe she has lived every word that she sings. On the finale *Baby Don't Speak* Karyn gives him both barrels—'Let

