

### Sideways Reign A STAND FOR ALL STAGES

Self Released

★★★★

*Definitely one to watch*

This Seattle, Washington State based four-piece outfit have built up quite a following through their relentless touring so much so that sales already near 2000 copies of this self-released debut album. Some excellent songs, at times a with a bleak theme, and a good mixture of rock, reggae, folk and blues and good value too with eleven tracks and most delving into the five-plus minutes category. The band leader is Justin Stang who has a raspy vocal style, already likened to Ray LaMontagne, and he is supported by cousin Casey Dehe on lead guitar and Mike Dennis and Cody Goodwin on drums and bass respectively. They seem to take collective credit for all of the songs here.

There are some dark recesses explored with *Anna Leave Me*, *Holly & Emma*, *Friends Like These* and *Love Song Suicide* but all have a storyline and hold the attention. Also the anti-war diatribe *Liar* eloquently states that side of the argument. A couple of tracks set me thinking of Jean Michel Jarre, the opener *Oxygen* was merely the title as this one thumps along and is the tale of freedom from a relationship but the later, and sole, instrumental *C2H2* could be a JMJ title and is very much in Jarre style. However the tracks I liked best are those with the reggae beat—*Endless Moving* and *Settle On* together with the stirring *Rebels Rise*. There is not a duff track on this debut album and it is well worth your consideration. **Paul Collins**  
[www.sidewaysreign.com](http://www.sidewaysreign.com)



it a distinctive new treatment that works. Alongside new recordings by Levon Helm and the Blind Boys of Alabama there are several older recordings including Kinky Friedman's version of *Lover Please* with special guests Waylon and Willie, the Newbeats classic 1960s hit *Bread And Butter* and Adam Duritz's definitive rendition of Warren Zevon's *Carmelita*. A great mix of tracks for a worthwhile cause makes this a winner. **Alan Cackett**  
[www.imusranchfoods.com](http://www.imusranchfoods.com)

### The O's BETWEEN THE TWO

Idol Records IR088

★★★★

*Effortlessly cool Americana*

With hindsight it was possibly a tad unfair to the other albums that I reviewed this month, because when I listened to BETWEEN THE TWO by the O's on my MP3 player I was walking through the park, the sun was shining and I was already in an unusually good mood; which, dear reader, apart from cruising the highways and byways in an open top coupe is the perfect time to listen to this album. The O's are Dallas duo Taylor Young and John Pedigo who both have okay voices and play the usual assortment of acoustic instruments, but their songwriting and the overall sound that they create is...spectacular!

Opening track *We'll Go Walkin* stopped me right in my tracks and I had to check the album cover several times to confirm that there really are only two guys in the O's. They have such a fulsome sound they could easily be a 4 or 5 piece band and that track is already pencilled in to be my 'song of the summer.' The O's are a mixture of the Louvin Brothers and the Lovin' Spoonful. Seriously good playing married to tip-top songwriting with more than a smattering of joie de vivre. The songs are all 'cool' but can hit on some relatively serious subjects when necessary—the death of coal mining in *Tennessee Coalminer* and 'social politics' in *In Numbers We Survive*—and the obligatory love songs—*Remember You* and my personal favourite, the jaunty *Sunshine*.

Even though I am currently suffering from banjo-fatigue; John Pedigo's playing left me stunned, as he takes the bloody thing onto a whole new level and he could easily become the Jimi Hendrix of the banjo! I can't get quite believe the overwhelming 'power' that the two O's produce throughout BETWEEN THE TWO. It's genuinely amazing and only hints at what they will produce live, on stage. **Alan Harrison**  
[www.weartheos.com](http://www.weartheos.com)



### The Travelling Band SCREAMING IS SOMETHING

Cooking Vinyl COOKCD538

★★★

*Pleasant sound—but what is it?*

An appealing follow up album to UNDER THE PAVEMENT, tracks from which received considerable airplay on Radios 2 and 6. A six-piece band most of whom originate from the Manchester area, four on vocals with engaging harmonies and versatility and quality of instrumentation. The lead singer, Adam Gorman, has a vocal similarity to Brandon Flowers and on certain tracks you could be forgiven for thinking you were listening to the Killers or indeed Travis. Not quite folk, pop or soul or country it is never too way out to be irretrievably categorised there are some good songs and in the main the music is varied, pleasant and likeable. Travelling Band's publicity guys call it 'cosmic country pop' so there you go.



*Fairweather Friends* is a jump along song and good intro track with a 'who cares' approach to the kind of folk we have all come across and it is then straight into the title track which predictably is a standout, meaningful words explaining a sensitive subject and conveying a very mature understanding of emotions. Good musical arrangement and production on the title track too. The title track from the debut album gets another airing here, well it did get Single of the Week on Radio 2, has a bluegrass feel with a very catchy banjo riff but to put it in again has more than a suggestion of overcooking the recipe. It's probably here as there seems to be a shortage of acceptable new songs to finish the album with two or three real clunkers included. I particularly disliked the final track *On the Rails* best described as a seven-minute piece of psychedelic nonsense with predicable musical weirdness.

Worth buying for the title track, *Battlescars* a descriptive tale of love gone wrong and the reprise of *Under the Pavement*. **Paul Collins**  
[www.the.travellingband.com](http://www.the.travellingband.com)

### Tim Grimm THANK YOU TOM PAXTON

Vault Records

★★★★

*A dozen, mostly vintage, Tom Paxton tunes cleverly arranged and beautifully performed*

Born in Chicago, Illinois folk legend Tom Paxton's teen years were spent in Bristow, Oklahoma a town he considers home. Singer-songwriter Paxton landed in Greenwich Village in time for the folk music boom of the early 1960s. Signed by Jac Holzman's then nascent New York City based Elektra Records, Tom's debut studio album RAMBLIN' BOY appeared in 1964. In a recording career that spans close on half a century, including collaborations, compilations and live recordings Paxton has released in excess of fifty albums, although this Tim Grimm tribute draws material from only half-a-dozen titles. In his liner note Grimm recalls that around the age of 'five or six years' Paxton's music entered his life and has been a constant inspiration and reference point in the decades since.

This twelve-song tribute opens, appropriately, with *Rumblin' In The Land* a selection from Paxton's 1964 debut. Supported by Jason Wilber's electric guitar and Joe Crookston's banjo, Tim and Joe share the lead vocal. Years ahead of its time and doubling as a road song, Paxton's lyric focuses on blue-collar America's financial struggles. RAMBLIN' BOY also supplies the later segue of the perennial *Last Thing On My Mind*—a 1967 number 7 US country hit for Dolly Parton and Porter Wagoner—and the less well known *Fare Thee Well, Cisco*—a tribute to folk musician Cisco Houston. Replete with swampy sounding organ *Bishop Cody's Last Request* hails from Paxton's fifth studio outing THE THINGS I NOTICE NOW (1969), as does the later *All Night Long*—which features the sweet and addictive vocal harmonies of the Bowmans, Sarah and Claire and also Anne Hurley's darkly hued cello—and this collection's closing tune *I Give You The Morning*. Being a careful custodian of this planet's environment was hardly a hot subject back in 1970, but Paxton's album #6 featured the 'totally on the money' apocalyptic ballad *Whose Garden Was This?* The Bowmans share the lead vocal with Grimm on the latter.

The rambunctious and rhythmic *My Favourite Spring* finds the narrator reflect upon his days playing baseball as he anticipates his talented teen son's career. The latter tune hails from UP & UP (1979) as does the later *Home To Me*. Supported by animated bluegrass quintet the White Lightning Boys, Paxton's Warner Reprise debut HOW COME THE SUN (1971) supplies *General Custer*, and it's followed by #6's *Forest Lawn* on which Grimm and Krista Detor share the lead vocal. The most recent Paxton composition *How Beautiful Upon The Mountain*—which recalls the Selma and other 1960s Civil Rights marches—opened Tom's Grammy nominated release COMEDIANS & ANGELS (2008). **Arthur Wood**  
<http://www.timgrimm.com/>

