

DUSTY RELICS

top ten, but here we have the definitive version. Overall, both albums are well up to the Jones' standard with a fine mix of fiddle-and-steel guitar driven honky-tonk ballads, the occasional string sweetening that is never overdone or too lush and that Jones voice full of heartbreak and regret epitomising the very best of country soul music. **Alan Cackett**

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Glen Campbell GLEN TRAVIS CAMPBELL/I KNEW JESUS (BEFORE HE WAS A STAR)/I REMEMBER HANK WILLIAMS



BGO Records BGOCD1085

★★

*1970s countrypolitan schlock
masquerading as country music ...*

I'm sitting here listening to this Glen Campbell compilation of three of his early 1970s albums reissued over a double-CD package, just after completing my review of a pair of Steve Goodman albums from the same era. Campbell is considered a country music icon; Goodman a folksy singer-songwriter. Yet, the Goodman recordings are, in my humble opinion, much, much closer to what country music should be than virtually any of the 29 tracks here. So why is it that the country music community—that is record labels, radio, fans, media—readily embrace virtually anything a 'country' artist like Campbell produces, whilst shutting out a so-called 'outsider' like Steve Goodman, despite the fact that it is the latter who is much closer to what country music is supposed to be. Oh well, that's quite a can of worms, so let's just get down to this package.

I think I've made it pretty plain, this is not 'country' as I know it. It's heavy-handed pop music that Glen handles okay if you like that kind of thing. At times the arrangements are just too lush and over the top, drowning the songs and forcing out any genuine heart and soul. I'm a huge Glen Campbell fan, but at times he just travels down the wrong pathway. His version of Tom Paxton's *Last Thing On My Mind* could well be the worst rendition of this folk classic I've ever heard. If you were hoping for something better from the Hank Williams' tribute, then you're in for a great disappointment. It's

again all lush strings and singalong choruses, with all the earthy soul and desolation of the songs squeezed out. I have no problem with country artists stepping out of their comfort zone to sing pop standards, especially if they do it really well and add something distinctive. But here we have a collection of country and folk songs plus a handful of pop tunes given totally unsympathetic treatments. This whole package is the worst excesses of 1970s countrypolitan. **Alan Cackett**

www.bgo-records.com

Marty Robbins BY THE TIME I GET TO PHOENIX/ TONIGHT CARMEN



Morello Records MRLL 19

★★★★★

*Maybe I've gone over the top ... but you
must get this album*

When it comes to singing straight country music, there's few that come close to touching Marty Robbins. *Southern Dixie Flyer*, a song buried on his 1964 RFD album is as good, if not better, than anything that the likes of Hank Williams, Buck Owens, Ray Price, Merle Haggard or Vern Gosdin ever recorded. When it comes to singing pop ballads, again there's few, if any, that come near ol' Marty. You want proof? Just slip this 2on1 CD into your player, sit back and let him do his magic. Both of these LPs I bought way back in 1967 and 1968. They've not previously been made available on CD, and as I rarely play my vinyl these days, it's been years since I've heard them and just couldn't believe how good both are.

Let's look at PHOENIX first. It was promoted by Columbia at the time as a 'pop' album and was produced by legendary pop and rock producer Bob Johnston with string arrangements by Robert Mersey. It's probably the best vocals I've ever heard from Marty. His phrasing on old pop chestnuts *As Time Goes By* and *That Old Feeling* is just incredible. Then there were then-current songs like Jimmy Webb's *By The Time I Get To Phoenix* and the Beatles' *Yesterday*, both of which Marty totally owns. Even more impressive, though, are his own songs. It's often forgotten how versatile a songwriter he was. *To Be In Love With Her* could well be the finest love song he ever wrote, and again his phrasing is superlative.

Just as that album finishes, you are

transported straight into the Mexican-flavoured TONIGHT CARMEN, which was released in 1967. Again, it's Marty the songwriter that will knock you off your feet with the title love song ... a tale that flows effortlessly and again an impeccable vocal performance. I could go on and on and on ... but to be honest, I'd rather just sit back and relax and take in the pure, one-of-a-kind artistry that is Marty Robbins. To all *Maverick* readers, regardless of your age, your musical preferences, if you only buy one more album this year ... you need to make it this one. Close your ears to genre prejudice and just listen with an open mind. I'd be amazed if you're not suitably impressed by the sheer all-round talent of probably the finest vocalist of the 20th century. **Alan Cackett**

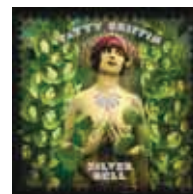
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Patty Griffin SILVER BELL

A&M/Universal Music

★★★★☆

*At last, Griffin's SILVER
BELL is allowed to ring
loud, clear and true*



In 2000 A&M Records should have released Patty Griffin's SILVER BELL, her 'third album' for the imprint. Although promotional discs were circulated, the release was cancelled. As the 20th century wound down A&M became part of Universal Music, and in a roster reshuffle Griffin was dropped. Segue forward a decade, Patty scored a Gospel Grammy for 2010's DOWNTOWN CHURCH, was subsequently recruited for Robert Plant's Band of Joy, enjoys an ongoing liaison with 'Percy' while a few months ago her critically lauded AMERICAN KID surfaced. So why release a remixed, 14-song version of SILVER BELL now? It's not that I'm saying the machinations of the music business are curious ... actually I am!

Making Pies and *Standing* on the aforementioned promotional discs have been replaced by *Fragile* and *So Long*. On her 2002 ATO Records debut 1000 KISSES Patty accomplished a stunning interpretation of *Making Pies*; three years later the Craig Ross produced IMPOSSIBLE DREAM revisited *Top Of The World*, *Mother Of God* and *Standing*. Plus there were covers, many covers ... the Dixie Chicks mega selling HOME (2002) included *Truth #2* and a six-minute *Top Of The World*. The

Greencards *WEATHER AND WATER* (2005) and Joan Osborne's *PRETTY LITTLE STRANGERS* (2006) featured *What You Are*, on *STAND STILL LOOK PRETTY* (2006) female duo The Wreckers covered *One More Girl*, and—finally—Natalie Maines included *Silver Bell* on her solo debut *MOTHER* (2013).

The *SILVER BELL* sessions took place at Daniel Lanois' Kingsway Studios in New Orleans, the last album to be fully recorded there, with production, individually, by Jay Joyce (guitars)—nine songs—and Craig Ross—five songs. In the liner note Patty comments that Glyn Johns' remix 'has breathed some new life into the time capsule.' In the studio Griffin (vocals, guitars, piano) was supported by long-time sideman Doug Lancio (guitars), plus Frank Swart (bass), Billy Beard (drums) and John Deaderick (keyboards).

Album opener *Little God* is a lyrically enigmatic character study—'All the strippers think you're odd, But you leave the biggest tip'—replete with opening but distant bagpipes, and eastern sounding guitar throughout, not unlike *Ohio* (a Plant co-write) on *AMERICAN KID*. Emmylou Harris supplies backing vocal on the ensuing, edgy love paean *Truth #2*, Griffin shifts into rhythmic overdrive and reawakens old memories during a Memorial Day visit to *Boston*—the city she once called home. Keyboards, pounding drums and distorted guitar propel *Perfect White Girls*, the ballads *Sooner Or Later* and *What You Are*—the latter co-written with Craig Ross—individually possess dream-like qualities, while *Silver Bell*, in the spirit of Patty's sophomore *FLAMING RED*, is a spandex clad, rockin' sonic storm.

Griffin's lyrics regularly reference water, whether a miniscule 'pearl' or an immense 'ocean,' and *Fragile* spotlights the latter. The gentle and melodically rippling, piano led rendition of *Mother Of God* touches on biographical fact, while ultimately it's wistful and quite simply exquisite. In *One More Girl* a straight-talking woman pulls no punches regarding 'true love,' as for *Sorry And Sad* it's a harsh summation of a past relationship launched by 'You used to make me so mad,' while it's hardly a stretch to figure out *Driving*. The *Top Of The World* narrator is male—close to death, he reflects on his life—the song is and always will be a classic, and engaging album closer *So Long* similarly explores the fragile nature of life.

Here's the deal Universal, what price to resurrect the unreleased 'studio version' of

Griffin's *LIVING WITH GHOSTS*? What are you waiting for, it's sitting right there in your vaults... **Arthur Wood**

www.pattygriffin.com

Paul Overstreet SOWIN' LOVE/ HEROES

Morello Records MRLL 15

★★★★

Quality country music that is highly recommended



Paul Overstreet, one of Nashville's most successful songwriters, with more than 25 top ten country hits to his credit, including the Grammy-award winning *Forever And Ever, Amen* and *Love Can Build A Bridge*, enjoyed a run of top ten country hits as a singer from 1987 through to 1991, then inexplicably faded from the scene. His first solo project began when RCA released *SOWIN' LOVE* in 1989. The five singles released from this album were all top ten hits, including the title cut, *Sowin' Love*, *All The Fun*, and his first number one, *Seein' My Father In Me*. The second album, *HEROES*, which followed in 1991 included the hits *Daddy's Come Around*, *If I Could Bottle This Up*, *Heroes* and *Billy Can't Read*, which became the theme song for the CMA/CMT Project Literacy.

All 20 songs spread across these two albums were penned by Overstreet, often co-writes with Don Schlitz, Holly Dunn or Dean Dillon. He specialised in low-key country moralistic tunes. Often they creep up behind you with a velvet hammer to get a point across; sometimes even clobber you over the head. His songs are flowery odes to love, faith and family. You won't find any cheaters, beer-drinkers or all-night party-goers as leading players in Paul's songs. Instead, his lyrics tell of husbands who love their wives, sons who respect their fathers and, common, everyday people who rely on goodness and faith to get them through life's seemingly endless maze of complications. They are a far cry from today's country music that champions beer-drinkin' rednecks, chasin' scantily-clad women and a shallow, good-time lifestyle. Paul's songs like *Richest Man On Earth*, *Love Never Sleeps* and *Straight And Narrow* are unpretentious in their sincerity and emotional directness. They are his own personal hymns that pay homage to the beauty of love, to the family, to his rural

roots and to his strong Christian beliefs. The production is pure country with plenty of fiddles, steel guitar, mandolin and acoustic guitars to the fore with back-up vocals courtesy of Trisha Yearwood, Pam Tillis, Lisa Silver and Donna Rhodes. This 2on1 reissue reminds us what a great songwriter Paul Overstreet is and also what a fine, trad-sounding vocalist... one who is deserving of more widespread acclaim. **Alan Cackett**

www.cherryred.co.uk

Peter Bruntnell RETROSPECTIVE

Loose B00CHBD1TW

★★★★

A fine career retrospective from the acclaimed singer-songwriter and purveyor of British Americana



Peter Bruntnell has been around for more than 20 years now, attracting comparisons to such names as Squeeze, Crazy Horse, Uncle Tupelo/Wilco and Son Volt, with whom he has toured frequently, and remains a unique talent on the music scene with his eclectic mix of country, blues and rock. This 17-track career *RETROSPECTIVE* is long overdue, and draws on the nine albums he has released since his 1995 Almo Records debut *CANNIBAL*. It's a solid set, although there are one or two obvious omissions and his latest album is not represented at all.

For the record, the singles *I Will, I Won't* and *Astronaut* from *CANNIBAL* are missing, the title track and *Saturday Sam* from *CAMELOT IN SMITHEREENS* (1997) are absent, and it's also a no-show from any of the tracks from last year's *Domestico* release *RINGO WOZERE*. But it doesn't necessarily follow that singles represent an artist's best work. So what are we left with?

The album opens with the lovely *I Want You* from *CANNIBAL*, which pitches sweet, desperate vocals against raw electric guitar runs, followed by the lilting vibrato of his debut LP's other entry, the pensive *Bent Out Of Shape*. *CAMELOT IN SMITHEREENS* offers the chugging single *Have You Seen That Girl Again* and the ponderous lyrics and guitar distortion of *25 Reasons*, and the tempo is raised for the dreamy *Shot From A Spring* and *Handful Of Stars* from *NORMAL FOR BRIDGEWATER* (1999).

In addition to the tracks mentioned, highlights include the steel guitar sounds