

BRUM BEAT

THE MIDLANDS ENTERTAINMENT MONTHLY

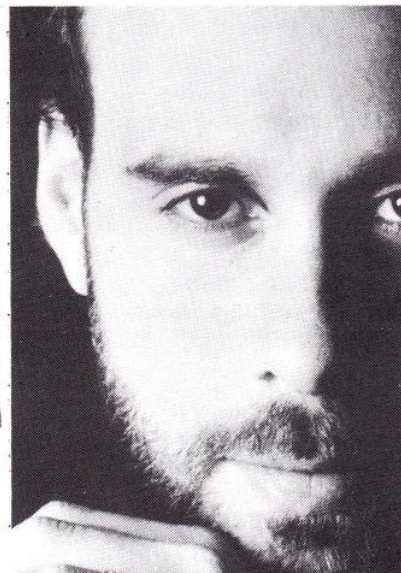
NUMBER 133

JANUARY 1992

1991: WE PICK THE BEST



NIRVANA



MARC COHN



REM

PLUS: MIKE DAVIES' ALMANAC * NEWS * VIEWS * REVIEWS
AND A BRIGHT NEW YEAR

As we launch into another year, rather than tread the well worn path of casting a conventional backward glance my thoughts turned towards contemplation of a retrospective of potential fantasies for the coming months. Why make it obvious when the ridiculous will suffice!

Tower Records opened an eight and one half floor megastore in The Rotunda with no prior press announcement or accompanying brouhaha. Stocked in the more esoterically obscure areas of music, at a level equivalent to their Piccadilly Circus outlet in London with mountains of

attractively (read sensibly) priced import titles; other local pretenders to the mega stocking title soon found that the repercussions of being bucked didn't apply to horse riders alone!

*Formed in Tuan, County Galway, what seems like centuries ago; first mentioned in the annals of the national music press by Mike Scott a couple of years back; through 1992 they topped the UK singles charts on no less than five occasions. What's more, they also claimed Canuck rocker Bryan Adams No 1 longevity title, yes **The Saw Doctors** set about conquering Planet Earth with their peculiar, but

ARTHUR WOOD

rewarding brand of getting rhythm.

*Local and national radio stations discovered an untapped plethora of music on labels such as High Street/Windham Hill, Flying Fish, Kaleidoscope, Brambus, Rainlight, Minidoka, Potato Satellite, Border Recording Co, Agua Azul, Singing Flower, North Star, Watermelon. thankfully, even by year end the list appeared endless. **Mike Davies** replaced Andy Kershaw on the Sunday night Radio 1 slot. Sanity came slowly to the structured airwaves once again. *'Amazing Grace' the documentary film of the song, finally enjoyed limited screening in Britain. BBC2 plans to bring it to the small screen during 1993.

*When the time for the annual pilgrimage to the Cambridge Folk Festival rolled around again, it was pleasing to note that the three day event had returned to the old, time served billing format. Topping the bill on the traditionally British, Friday night was Reading's own **Terry Clarke** backed by J.D. Foster (bass), David Halley (guitar), on his second UK visit of the year, **Mike Messer** (guitar) and **Davis McLarty** (drums). 'Q' later described Clarke as "undoubtedly, the find of the century". His third album for Minidoka, 'From Those October Airwaves', charted nationally as the year drew to a close. **Johnny Cash**, **Nanci Griffith** and **The Everly Brothers** covered tunes from Clarke's vast catalogue. The rest of the Cambridge bill featured a

swathe of Texan musicians. Over the last handful of festivals the Lone Star syndrome has become par for the course.

*Although the midsummer General Election almost resulted in a stalemate as far as the major parties were concerned, the new Chancellor, in a magnanimous gesture of appreciation for the contribution made to the final result by the youth of the nation, scrapped VAT on records, tapes and CDs soon after taking office.

*Following the re-emergence a few years back of John Bauldie's favourite songwriter, **Tom Pacheco**, the past twelve months witnessed stage and album comebacks by other performers who have been out of the public eye for awhile including **David Ackles**, **Laurie Stivers**, **Willis Alan Ramsey**, **Bonnie Koloc** and **David Mansfield**. And they say that it has never been the singer, it has always been the song!

*Highlights of the year, on the acoustic music front, included **David Halley** alive, alone and amazing at 'Roots And Branches', a new club dedicated to real music the stunning songs of **Tom Russell**, aided by **Andy Hardin**'s incredible guitar picking at same venue **Steve Earle**, edgy and uneasy in **Cotteridge** **BRUM BEAT**'s autumn triple header of **Tom Pacheco**, **John Gorka** and **Eric Taylor** at the Town Hall **Michael Smith**, hot on the heels of his third **Flying Fish** album, 'Fifty/Fifty', packed them in at the Wulfrun Hall for his UK concert debut.

*Albums of the year included **Tom Russell**'s 'Hurricane Season'; **Janis Ian**'s comeback, 'There's More To A Decade, Than A Rosary' including the sardonic humour of 'Cosmopolitan Girl'; **James McMurtry**'s 'Last Train To Texasville'; **Willis Alan Ramsey**'s first album in twenty years, 'Views From Leith Walk'; **Christine Albert**'s 'Texafrance' and **Shawn Colvin**'s 'Polaroids'. Eagerly awaited and due in the opening months of next year is the return of the Bitchin' Babes, with 'The Babes Do Hollywood'.

*Hot on the heels of last year's hyping of 'Doors - The Movie' came the formation of a series of sixties style, let's get back to the basics, supergroups. **Iain Matthews**, now an Austin, Texas resident, teamed up with studio owner/producer/axeman (par excellence) **Mark Hallman**, **Michael Fracasso** and songstress **Eliza Gilkyson** to produce the fifteen track tribute 'The Stars of Austin'. In true Peter, Pauline and Mary fashion, **Lenny Cohen** took to the road with **Jennifer Warnes** and **Lucinda Williams**. Release of a live album, cut during the tour, remained an unconfirmed three way tie between their respective labels at year end.

*As if he didn't have enough strings to his guitar already, **Ry Cooder** along with **John Hiatt**, **Nick Lowe** and **Jim Keltner** took their 'Little Village' album to the world under the guise of **2 Guitars Bass and Drums**.

*1991 saw the UK release, on the Demon label, of the **Butch Hancock/Rainlight** retrospective 'Own & Own'. The following year saw its Stateside appearance on Sugar Hill Records. Early this year the two independent labels joined forces to fund new recordings by the Texas troubador, resulting in 'Per Verse Word' which was nominated for a folk music Grammy last month.

*Having become an affliction during 1991, the release of box sets continued unabated during the year. Kicking in early was the four-CD set on Rhino/Tomato from **Townes Van Zandt**. Among those duetting with our hero were **Johnny Cash**, **Willie Nelson**, **Tammy Wynette**, **Steve Earle**, **Joe Ely**, **Tanya Tucker** and **Robbie Zimmerman**. Other notable 1992 multi-packs included the long promised **Buffalo Springfield** retro; a set from the original **Flying Burrito Brothers** which included their long lost album 'Psalms For Polly' and **Joni Mitchell**'s ten disc set 'Canadian Dry'.

*Trouble is, some of the foregoing might just by some extraordinary twist of fate be/come true. Then again, it has always been a fine dividing line

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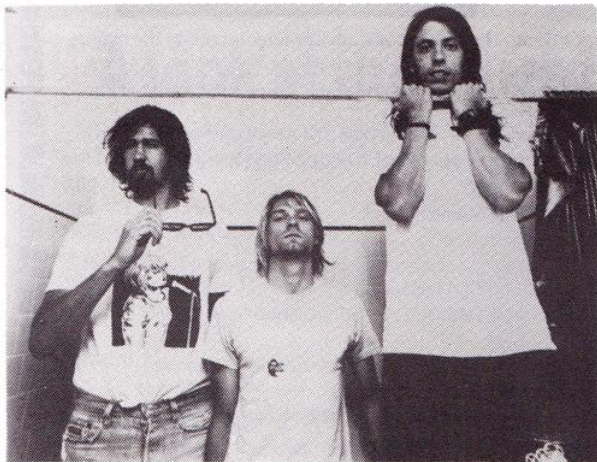
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NIRVANA - Chris Novoselic, Kurt Cobain and David Grohl

PAUL FLOWER

Columnist, Broadcaster (without show), PR man and self declared pompous know it all!

BEST NEW ALBUM

1: **NIRVANA** 'Nevermind'

Pop songs played by psychopaths.

2: **THE WONDER STUFF** 'Never Loved Elvis'

Pop songs as played by fiddlers and grebos.

3: **CROWDED HOUSE** 'Woodface'

Pop songs as played by satirists.

4: **REM** 'Out Of Time'

Greater recognition for the world's best band even with one of their most introverted LPs in years.

5: **GUNS N' ROSES** 'Use Your Illusion 1'

Do believe the hype, almost worth the wait.

BEST SINGLE

1: **ANTHRAX & PUBLIC ENEMY** 'Bring The Noize'

2: **ERASURE** 'Love To Hate You'

BEST COVER VERSION

1: **LIVING COLOR** 'Should I Stay Or Should I Go?'

Ravaged the original and turned it back into a rock song rather than a commercial.

BEST GIG SEEN IN '91

BINGO HAND JOB The Borderline, London

O.K so it's showing off, I got to see a secret REM gig with about 400 other people and it was everything you might expect it to be with a personal touch. Devastating.

BEST REISSUE/COMPILATION

LED ZEPPELIN 'Remasters'

Zep fans come streaming out of their Afghans, this band invented metal.

ARTHUR WOOD

Brum Beat Contributing Editor, wannabe Texan and Kerrvert

BEST NEW ALBUM

1: **DAVID WILCOX** 'Home Again' (Import)

Vocally you'd say James Taylor. Then again, was that Neil Diamond? On the other hand, Wilcox' self penned material sources from an infinitely higher plain.

2: **JOHN GORKA** 'Jack's Crows'

Second year in a row that Gorka delivers the bacon. Singer-songwriter of the decade?

3: **MEGON McDONOUGH, CHRISTINE LAVIN, PATTY LARKIN, SALLY FINGERETT** 'Buy Me, Bring Me, Take Me: Don't Mess My Hair!!!'

Girls just wanna have fun ... and do, inxs. A rainbow of emotions. Volume 1 of many? Well at least I can hope.

4: **TERRY CLARKE** 'The Shelly River'

5: **TOM PACHECO** 'Sunflowers & Scarecrows'

BEST REISSUE/COMPILATION

1: **GENE CLARK** 'Echoes' (Import)

Restricted to early career cuts, the minstrel of melancholy finally gains deserved recognition. Sad that it took his untimely death to generate it.

BEST GIG SEEN IN '91

JANIS IAN Cambridge Folk Festival

Ten years on from her last commercial release and tour, Janis proves that she still has the skill to compose killer songs.

KEVIN WILSON

Brum Beat Contributing Editor and Satellite TV protagonist.

BEST NEW ALBUM

1: **REM** 'Out Of Time'

2: **OMD** 'Sugar Tax'

3: **EMF** 'Schubert Dip'

4: **ELVIS COSTELLO** 'Mighty Like A Rose'

5: **ENYA** 'Shepherd's Moon'

BEST REISSUE/COMPILATION

1: **KRAFTWERK** 'The Mix'

2: **GRAND FUNK RAILROAD** 'Capitol Collector Series'

BEST GIG SEEN IN '91

1: **KRAFTWERK** The Hummingbird, Birmingham

... so I've heard !!!

2: **RANKIN' PAUL FLOWER & TOASTIN' MIKE DAVIES** My Birthday Rave, Whittington Village Hall

3: **ANYTHING** at Lichfield Arts Centre 'cos it's local and it looks like the Monday nights are soon to be history!



ANDY McCLUSKEY of
Orchestral Manoeuvres
in the Dark



SPIREA X

DAVID TRAVIS

Promoter, photographer and entrepreneur

BEST NEW ALBUM

1: **PRIMAL SCREAM** 'Screamadelica'

2: **MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO** '99% Meat'

3: **SPIREA X** 'Fireblade Skies'

4: **KINGMAKER** 'Eat Yourself Whole'

5: **DINOSAUR JR.** 'Green Mind'

BEST REISSUE/COMPILATION

1: **VARIOUS**

'Out Of Time: The very Best Of The Imaginary Tribute Series'

BEST GIG SEEN IN '91

1: **VIOLENT FEMMES** Moseley Dance centre, Birmingham

2: **MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO/CONSOLIDATED** The Institute, Birmingham

3: **DOGFOOD** Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

VARIOUS Planet Africa Planet Reggae (Instant/Charly)

A public service announcement no less. Aimed at world music virgins these two well packed CDs are mid price gems. Both feature mega stars of the genre; the reggae set with Peter Tosh, Yellow Man, Gregory Isaacs, Bob Marley, Third World and Burning Spear; the African set with Mory Kante, Salif Keita, Yousou 'N'Dour, Miriam Makeba and Alpha Blondy. Perfect primers.

Steve Morris

VARIOUS Volume 2 (Volume/APT)

Volume 2 is a 78 minute CD attached to a 192 page book that retails through sensible record shops for £9.99.

In essence the disc is a showcase for the indie scene peppered with alternate mixes and previously unreleaseds. Featured are Lush, System7, Nine Inch Nails, New FADS, EMF, Sugarcubes and lots more. The book is well presented though seemingly no more collectable than any other mag. Which brings me to a thought:- There is a monthly classical music mag that includes a cased 70 minute plus CD each month; it retails at around three quid. Quite obviously there is collusion with record companies who grasp the promotional impact. Why can't they do it with rock music? 'Volume 2' at three quid would be mandatory, at ten it remains a nice idea.

Steve Morris

CHUCK BERRY The Chess Years (Chess)

If, as Bob Dylan maintains, Smokey Robinson is the US's poet laureate then Chuck Berry is the nation's peerless short story writer. A genuine artist and immeasurable influence. Without Berry rock and pop would be a totally monochrome expression. He gave it form and expression, he peopled his songs with developed characters, honest scenarios and believable dialogue. He made possible The Beatles, The Stones, Dylan, Springsteen and almost everyone else who since the 1950s has crafted a song intent on doing more than rhyming moon with June.

Consequently this landmark 9 CD box set is long overdue,

gathering as it does all 220 tracks he sculpted for Chess. And before you ask, yes that does include the inexcusable 'My Ding A Ling', all twelve minutes of it!

It is amazing that even that cannot dull the awesome achievement of Berry's almost accidental genius. After all he has always been above all a commercially minded musician, early cuts demonstrate a period of flirting with country music formats suggesting that he was neither dedicated rock'n'roller nor R&B purist. That must be the roots of his success; he almost subliminally forged a new and unique form as a by product of his need to succeed.

What really is amazing is that this document will still be seen by many as an excess of rock'n'roll and not an opportunity to own a body of work on a par with any in the fine art world.

Steve Morris

TISH HINOJOSA Aquella Noche (Topic)

Pronounced ah-KEH-ya No-che, it translates to That Certain Night and equates to a warm May 1991 evening at Waterloo Icehouse in Austin, Texas where Tish laid down this fourteen track set of songs sung mostly in Spanish. What's more, around half the material here is sourced from Tish's own pen.

Should you despair at your linguistic limitation in Spanish, the lyrics are also reproduced in English in the liner. With Paul Simon's early sixties composition 'Carlos Dominguez' Tish reminds us how that songwriter has in fact come full circle in three decades.

A gentle acoustic album for quiet evenings, which provides this particular nightingale with a chance to shine in her ancestral tongue. Simple, subdued and satisfying.

Arthur Wood

MICHAEL JACKSON Dangerous (Epic)

Well, I guess the world is desperate for this to stiff. Which, comparatively speaking it will. The reasons being that Jacko cannot ever match 'Thriller' - no-one will let him and since that time the pop world has become more and more fast food oriented. Consequently the lack of anything new on the shiny surface of 'Dangerous' damns it whilst a closer look, which won't

reveal a deal more, at least allows Jackson's dependable magic to work.

The real problem is that, objectively at least, it's too damn good. The production is awesome and the attention to detail microscopic. The sound recording is state of the art and in parts breathtaking in its detail. Sadly such time consuming obsessiveness robs the work of life and where Jackson would benefit from the audacity of Prince (an obvious influence here) he has fallen prey to perfection.

There are few capable of releasing seventy odd minutes of such quality these days but wouldn't it be great if Jackson were to issue an unpolished diamond in, say, six months time that really was as good as this hints at. Now that record could be dangerous.

Steve Morris

CROSBY, STILLS AND NASH Carry On (Atlantic)

As with Led Zep's box set, Atlantic have issued an abridged set for the non-committed and/or poor.

Unlike the Zep set this is peppered with unreleased and alternative takes. That's all well and good though it leaves this double halfway house in limbo, not quite a 'best of' and yet not well enough annotated to satisfy. And after all CSN fans tempted by the curios will surely stretch to the full box. Having said that, the old hippie harmonies are remastered to such a seductive standard that academic considerations of the double's shortcomings melt as the musical massage takes effect.

Steve Morris

COMMANDER CODY AND THE LOST PLANET AIRMEN

The Very Best Of
(See For Miles)

BILLY C. FARLOW I Ain't Never Had Too Much Fun (Appaloosa/Topic)

Quite coincidentally the release of a most welcome Cody compilation is matched by a new set from his one time frontman.

Now those unaware of Cody should know that his forte was country/swing/blues - based around standards and songs of trucks, drugs and booze. He



also had a fine line in humour and debunking that only Hank Wangford comes near in this kingdom. The best of is a quibble free 22 track distillation of his prime time. Only the release (in tact) of the 'Live At The Armadillo World Headquarters' set could trump it. Billy C's new album could come from that heyday though it's a bluesier beast and lacks the obvious humour. It does however retain the swagger and a joy in music that he invigorated the Airmen with. If you like brassy R&B give him a try. And don't miss Cody either.

Steve Morris

KING CRIMSON Frame By Frame (Virgin)

It's probably more fitting that Progrock ends up in the boxed set CD format than most other genres. After all reputations were made in some cases upon the grand gesture rather than the content.

King Crimson always bucked the rules, however. For sure their debut, 'In The Court Of The Crimson King', the body of which appears on the first of this box' four discs, was prog at its best; mad, portentous lyrics and marzipan sweet mellotron majesty a gogo but the buggers, er, progressed.

They took jazz egghead Keith Tippett onto Top Of The Pops and carved out a jazz rock niche that owed nothing to the Weather report school that all others subscribed to.

Maybe it was the band's only constant, Robert Fripp and his Englishness that pulled it off. A man with the personal calm to anchor the surrounding storm and the musical ability to resist the laying of permanent foundations.

The conundrum is all here in this excellently presented, painstakingly annotated and stunningly remastered (at the artist's expense!!) box.

Steve Morris

NIK KERSHAW The Collection (MCA)

Once upon a time Nik Kershaw was a big thing in the music biz. He made catchy pop singles that in retrospect weren't half bad. But he contracted muso from somewhere, unsafe recording perhaps, whatever, so serious he became that no one listened anymore.

Muso then entered a period of remission enabling Mr. K. to hand on his experience to the son of a Tremeloe. Rehabilitation was at hand.

However, the sum total success story takes up only eleven cuts, four of which the mind refuses to remember, the threat of full remission and re-emergence from the back room is slight.

Mind you the seven remembered tracks are good; remember boys and girls, always practice safe recording, muso can be fatal.

Steve Morris

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LIVE REVIEWS



DIANA ROSS NEC Birmingham

La grande dame of MOR in Brum Beat? That should offend several hipsters! Well, the excuse runs along the lines of Motown, Supremes, mega quantities of hits, influence, blah, blah... Except that no excuses are due. OK so Ross is showbiz, let's accept that, but she has a charisma that is as rare as compassion in the Tory party and a vocal quality that shames Whitney and other young pretenders. Indeed with her (awful, ham fisted) band buried in the pit, a restrained lighting design and no dancers to hide amongst, she had 12,000 people in the palms of her elegant hands. Simply by communicating genuine warmth. Look she's back in June just to satisfy demand; go, see. She could be the last of her kind, catch her now - don't wait for the movie. Ask Jimmy Corkhill, he was there shouting requests and encouragement like a man possessed ...

Steve Morris

BUDDY GUY/ JOHN CAMPBELL Town Hall Birmingham

S..T! Buddy Guy said it several times; after his Jimi Hendrix impression, after his Stevie Ray Vaughan impression, after he missed a few notes, after he played his guitar with a drumstick, after..... S..T it was. The poor knowledgeable who answered Clapton, Vaughan and Knopfler (!!) when asked, "Do you know the blues?" S..T! Buddy Guy dressed in dungarees complete with patches - S..T! Even support man John Campbell was S..T! - S..T hot! A voice from down where the furnace keeps the world turning (and I don't mean Australia) and bottleneck playing continuing the Son House, Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, Johnny Winter line. If you missed the start of the show (you were in the bar?) or missed the whole show, Elektra have just released Campbell's excellent debut album. So with Joe Ely's rhythm section once again providing the tighter than a 'duck's rear' back-up, next February is the time when John Campbell returns - DON'T MISS HIM.

Fancy Wootton

TOM PACHECO Spread Eagle Folk Club Leicester

His third UK tour of the last pair of years lacked a second city date. To assuage my addiction there was no choice but to speed eastward. 'All Because Of You' kicked off Pacheco's seventeen song set and numerous memorable, new tunes followed. Irrevocable evidence that Tom's summer of self imposed isolation had achieved a golden harvest in words and music. From the resuscitation of a spirit in 'Paradise', through the hero worship of 'Minnesota Blue' to the latest twist in the JFK/Dallas assassination saga with 'Jessica Brown', Pacheco remains a master of the acoustic KO punch. Long may he retain the force to deliver the blows.

Arthur Wood



CHRIS REA NEC Birmingham

Chris must have regretted not having a support band to get the audience so naffed off that anything would be better - instead, it wasn't until the third song from the end that the band and Chris himself really seemed to have warmed up. Starting with 'Auberge' and 'Stainsby Girls' Chris's guitar solos had the desperate quality of a blues player who has just remembered that he's only got five notes to play with! - Definitely no Ry Cooder, but those gravelly vocals were excellent from the start, grinding through song after song. A hint of greatness peeped through on 'Texas' when the band started to come together, driving the beat like a Trans Am down the freeway and by the time everyone was thinking of de-icer and traffic jams, Chris was beginning to sizzle. 'Working On It' had us up in dribs and drabs, followed by 'Let's Dance' which had the place really stomping - and then the set ended! The audience had tasted blood by this time though and squeezed three encores out of the gravel King (Or was it just a wind up?). Definitely a case of 'Fool (If You Think it's Over)', but the best was well worth waiting for ...

Dave Massey

DEACON BLUE Symphony Hall Birmingham

Total indifference was always my approach to this outfit and when the pen of Mike Davies recently suggested greatness, I was ready to write him off rather than listen. So when tickets arrived out of the blue it was curiosity and an acid pen that led the way to the Hall.

Well ... no-one told me that Brum's showpiece venue was built on the road to Damascus but a night of revelation it was. Deacon Blue were not good, they were stunning ... and then some!

They play classic intelligent rock imbued with heart, soul, wit, dynamics, skill, feel, flair and taste. The strength of the band is just that. They act as a unit, sure Ricky Ross is the perfect frontman and the enthusiasm of Lorraine Macintosh's 'ultimate fan who got lucky' persona is

contagious but egos are subdued to the benefit of the whole.

Then there's the songs; melodic and worthwhile drawing, without hint of self conscious hipness, on whatever catches their ear.

Listen to their Bacharach cover and contrast to the 'look at me, I wanna be Jim Webb' self serving shenanigans of Swing Out Sister. Or, as performed on the night, Lorraine's 'Wild Mountain Thyme' or Ross' elegant cover of Dylan's 'Every Grain Of Sand'.

The indifference has definitely been replaced by wild enthusiasm, I can only believe that an angel sent the tickets to reaffirm the existence of quality rock.

Steven Morris

NIRVANA Academy Manchester

NANCI GRIFFITH Civic Hall Wolverhampton

Comparatively these concerts may have nothing in common but on consecutive nights last month ...

The natural heirs to noise culture, Nirvana blister into the brain with a succession of sonic blasts. Nerve-tingling raw this is psychotic pop from the edge, consistent melodies with mettle rather than metal. Live, the songs never end, they disintegrate leaving embers to smoulder dangerously. Nirvana are much more than Motorhead meets Black Sabbath or this decade's Husker Du, they could be the very band whose stage you wouldn't dare to dive from.

I was never swayed by the marketing ploys of new country - it's just old hat in better fitting Levis. Nanci Griffith doesn't live by categories, nor to any lifestyle I can probably identify with but pure penmanship and talent shine through - in this case brighter than a nova.

The voice of angels charms an already smitten audience with numerous tales of hardship and woe, they're a million miles from anything this crowd can ever have experienced yet the stories reach the heart through the art of the teller. Blissful.

Live music is far from dead, if you disagree you're obviously going to the wrong gigs.

Paul Flower

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