

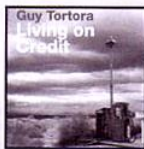
Guy Tortora
LIVING ON CREDIT
 Turtlelove Records GTXCD03
 ★★★★★

An artist who is dedicated and extremely skilful

If the title of his latest album is anything to go by, it appears that Guy Tortora knew something the financial and political worlds missed when he made **LIVING ON CREDIT**. If these troubled times are in search of an anthem then look no further than the title track which kicks the album off. Born and raised in Pasadena, California and now living in London, Tortora is the epitome of a working musician. He displays an easy and comfortable way with a blend of country, blues and even the odd hint of jazz.

Falling is a hearteningly warm and honest slice of nostalgia that is impossible to find fault with and easy to be enchanted by. Even the fiery White Boy Blues flows quite naturally, it sounds neither forced nor manufactured, Tortora simply sets the song loose and watches it gather pace of its own accord. Only the ear of an experienced and canny musician could have followed that with a version of the classic People Get Ready that is stunning in its purity, voice and steel guitar dance around each other with a grace and elegance. To call it a cover is to cheapen a memorable experience and insult both artist and song.

Guy Tortora is one of those musicians who, for some reason, seems to fly under the radar of fame. They go about their business with skill and dedication and treat their songs well, coaxing and caressing the most out of Like It That Way and Mama's Tired. But there is a real depth of feeling to Guy Tortora's music, nowhere more so than on the apocalyptic Cotton Was King, a song as bleak in style as the story it tells. **LIVING ON CREDIT** may never catapult its author into the upper reaches but it's a grown up album that Guy Tortora should be rightly proud of. **MM**
www.guytortora.com



for company and some long, drawn out nights for comfort, and vice versa.

The viscously liquid guitars, scowling, straining at their leads before spiralling out into dizzying descents and squalling arpeggios of white heat, leaving cordite traces mirroring Gareth Liddiard's lacerated lungs like they're scorched with the burning oilfields of the ravaged earths they walk, make these songs far more than just the uncharted pools from which the most intriguing lyricist of many a year emerges (probably since Spencer Moody of the Murder City Devils, 'cos of course you wanna know). Pirouetting incandescently around Liddiard's simmering, apoplectic, smoked creosote and crystal-dissolving snarl they match, express, accentuate and elucidate the confusion and non-plussed ire along with the more usual senses of foreboding and dislocation, with catastrophic perfection on the grimy glam scuffed-suede of *Oh My*—'People are a waste of food/ Don't bother learning Chinese/Thou shalt find oneself perturbed/By less verbose calamities/Just get some Heinz baked beans, a 12 gauge, bandolier and tinned dog food/We'll eat your dog, bury our dead/Or eat them instead/That's entirely up to you'. That they've retained the supernova turkey shoot sounds with a new guitarist in tow (Dan Liscombe, come on down) is relegated to a footnote under the wonderfully oppressive weight of the whole, where with most bands it'd be one of the few things to mention—and even then it's only mentioned to strive for some semblance of normalcy in these suburban charades.

As much Spiritualized, Suicide and Sun Ra skipping between the taut, enmeshed guitar lines like The 13th Floor Elevators warped take on Dylan's *It's All Over Now*, *Baby Blue*, exists in these uncharted waters, as on the pretty, though perhaps the more macabre because of it, *The Drifting Housewife*, as the surface still unsubstantiated images of Crazy Horse at only their most squallsome, if at all, or at the pounding close of *The Minotaur*, *The Birthday Party* and

Beasts Of Bourbon being chased out the bar by Mark E. Smith.

Deep, if not trenchant, elegant, eloquent, extravagant, esoteric, earthy, engaging and disquietingly exciting, again maybe it's a glib and easy hitch but they, along with Nick Cave and Leonard Cohen, Big Star's *THIRD/SISTER LOVERS* and pirate Idahoans Hillfolk Noir, are one of few acts to fully harness the realms of fervently euphoric melancholia and grim n' grimy menace. *HAVILAH* is another statuesque piece of art—a rare occurrence and one to behold. As when second full-lengther but main debut *WAIT LONG BY THE RIVER... AND THE BODIES OF YOUR ENEMIES WILL FLOAT BY*, this is the most exciting, uniquely thrilling record in a long time, right when it seems the blandness is suffocating. Stop reading, and you really should have by now, y'know, and go listen and embrace it with open qualms. **SG**
www.thedrones.com.au



Duke Garwood
HE WAS A WARLOCK
 Fire Records BLAZECD173
 ★★★★★

THE SAND THAT FALLS
 Fire Records FIRECD132
 ★★★★★

Experimental avant-blues

Two releases hot on each other's heels from London's Duke Garwood, the former an EP, the latter a full album. On both he shows himself to be a musician for whom both less and different is more, to such an extent that some may not even consider all of the sounds emanating from these discs to be music at all. Garwood makes the blues his foundation but what he puts on top is a building that's part Escher, part Dali. Perspective is wrong, corners aren't and nothing is quite what or where you expect it to be.

The EP is nearer the mainstream, with five tracks heavy on fuzz and

feedback, drones of guitar with distorted vocals and Garwood creating hypnotic and disturbing patterns of sound. *Rise A Woman* is the sound of a Mississippi soul tortured beyond endurance, while the title track incorporates snatches of found percussion and vocals just at the edge of hearing. *Each Man Sparkles* is more conventional with overtones of bohemian period Tom Waits but the best track is the appropriately named *Sound Is My Fruit*, which sounds like it was recorded underwater, with drums that are so low your bones vibrate. By contrast, on the album Garwood really stretches out. The title track is Tinariwen on downers while the five minutes of *Reap The Many Fruits* is the soundtrack to a particularly bad trip. Lo-fi strangeness is the motif and a song less like its title than *Mellow Trucker Lady* would be hard to imagine, consisting as it does of atonal snatches of guitar interspersed with exhortations to 'drive us to the edge.'

This is unashamedly experimental music that doesn't so much push boundaries as not recognise their existence. Visionary, challenging, anything but casual listening, it takes the blues to a new place. **JS**
www.myspace.com/dukegarwood

Dusty Rhodes and the River Band
PALACE 8 STAGE
 Side One Dummy
 ★★★★★

A superb sound from the 1970s that was supposed to have died out long ago but is still here

Hailing from California, this five-piece band exudes confidence from each and every pore and also includes some sublime lyrics and vocals which sound as though it was released as the Counterculture was on its last legs or had actually left this mortal peril. Being their second album, this twelve-track collection is one heck of a fine piece of work which puts shame on their contemporaries. Perhaps the most radio friendly of the tracks is *Andy*. With its dream-like start more typical of, for example, Tchaikovsky's *Waltz Of The Flowers* it is when hearing this track that it seems like an express train of awesomeness has hit you. Powerful vocals, along with a mixture of classical and pop music instrumentals, come together in the same way in which the Beatles did on a number of their more well-known tracks such as *Eleanor Rigby*.

W.W.M.D.? begins with what can only be described as some echoing and hauntingly excellent vocals which seem to penetrate the soul with such ease that it remains there for some time and takes a good shot of whisky to remove. Well, almost. Riffs like that should be outlawed. In *So Low*, the idealistic vocals seem perfect for this track. With beautiful instrumental and harmony backups, the somewhat odd inclusion of Spanish lyrics towards its conclusion contributes towards this song's quality. You can certainly imagine

...the new releases

this being played in some Barcelona Villa whilst a wild party erupts to its explosion. Many bands that are now considered as the greats did not show their full potential until at least their fourth album. Such talent and prospect at such an early stage in their career is quite shocking, and certainly endearing. **RH**
www.myspace.com/dustyrhodes

Ellis Paul
A SUMMER NIGHT IN GEORGIA
 Black Wolf Records
 ★★★★★

Brilliant new album by a great performer and song writer

It's August 2008 and Ellis is performing at Eddie's Attic in Decatur, Georgia. He first appeared at this famed folk venue back in 1992. The Mainer's between song introductions—short, long, amusing, sombre—add insight to each of the thirteen songs. Sat at the piano Paul opens with *Hurricane Angel*. Inspired by the devastation wreaked on America's Gulf Coast by Hurricane Katrina, merging mirth and pathos, Ellis paints a disturbing 21st millennium portrait of the plight of America and many of its citizens. With the precision of a prize-fighter at his peak, Ellis then pumps out a quartet of in-concert favourites. *Maria's Beautiful Mess* is followed by the Homer, Alaska anthem *Alice's Champagne Palace* and the quip: 'it's a little drinking village with a fishing problem.' Next up is *The World Ain't Slowin' Down*—covered by Jack Ingram on his forthcoming album *BIG DREAMS & HIGH HOPES*—and finally there's the travelogue *3,000 Miles* supported with sterling audience vocal support.

Waking Up To You, another new number, finds the narrator at turns driving through the dead of night, or sat drinking coffee in an all-night diner, all the while dreaming that 'come sunrise' he'll be in the arms of the woman he loves. Co-written with friend Kristian Bush of Sugarland, *Once Upon A Summertime* is also a new tune. Performed at the piano, the lyric reflects on a precious memory of love past. Expect to see the latter pair on his forthcoming studio album. The impromptu *Brant's Birthday Song* proves to be an amusing voyage through the life of a 30 year old audience member—past, present and future. Equally humorous, and previously unrecorded, *Calendar Man* is book-ended by the urgent *Black Top Train* and the closing selection *Take All The Sky You Need*. **AW**
www.ellisipaul.com

Enter The Haggis
GUTTER ANTHEMS
 United For Opportunity-UF01017
 ★★★★★

Vibrant, innovative, energetic and at times rowdy-great stuff!

Toronto-based Enter The Haggis are a superb Celtic rock band made

