

NEW RELEASES

The Barn Birds SAME

Waterbug Records

★★★★★

Great vocals, great playing, great songs, The Barn Birds simply score in spades



The Barn Birds are North Carolina's Jonathan Byrd (vocals, guitar) and Oregon's Chris Kokesh (vocals, fiddle). They met a few years ago while teaching at a song academy in Sisters, Oregon, and take their name from the squawking inhabitants of Sokol's Barn (in the town) where they undertook pre-production. In terms of what you hear there are no support players, no overdubs, there's no audio trickery, simply 13 well-constructed songs captured during a single ten-hour session by two seasoned performers who simply play their hearts out. In terms of their musical essence my thoughts run to male/female duo, acoustic country recordings of the 1940s and 1950s. An approach that works here in spades ...

The album was recorded at Blue Rock Studio and Artist Ranch in Wimberley, Texas, however no producer is credited on the liner. The disc features two bonus songs, which can only be played on computer—previous Byrd recordings have featured embedded content. Both are covers, namely the late Jack Hardy's *Autumn* and *Do You Smell Something Burning* co-written by Canadian's Corin Raymond and Rob Vaarmeyer. Album opener *We Used To Be Birds* is the first of four songs penned solely by Byrd, and therein, vocally, the pair soar and swoop. The lyric subtly alludes to the previous existence enjoyed by the participants—'Here's a sweet little song to remind us'—thereby turning the premise of Michael Peter Smith's *We Become Birds* neatly on its head. Byrd's *Hazel Eyes*, a love song, ingenuously alludes to how that colour turns 'the night into a tourmaline.' *One Night At A Time* the first of seven Byrd collaborations was penned with Anais Mitchell. It features a male narrator who claims: 'I'm a long haul man, not a one night stand' to which a feisty female retorts: 'Hey cowboy, we ain't even danced.' Love is further pursued in Jonathan's *In The Light Of Day*.

The waltz paced *Paint The Town Blue*, a Byrd/Kokesh co-write, relates

how love has turned sour, and features nimble finger-picked guitar from him, matched by soulful fiddle from her, while, later, their melodic *Desert Rose* is an engaging tale of love: 'Sometimes it hides, sometimes it shows.' *Maureen*, Byrd's fourth offering, is wistful both in word and melody. Anthony da Costa co-penned *Close Enough To Touch* a tale of, as yet unfilled, yearning. It's my belief that, a couple of decades ago, *It's Too Late To Call It A Night* would have been a sure-fire country hit single. It's a wee small hours tale, featuring a besotted couple, co-written with Amy Speace. Replete with an a cappella duet ending, *Sundays Loving You* is a sly and amusing paean that describes the activities a couple indulge in (or avoid) on the traditional day of rest. The latter was penned with New York City based Oklahoman Luke Dick. Ontario songbird Carey West co-wrote the final selection *Lay Your Hands On The Highway* which doubles as a road and love song. **Arthur Wood**

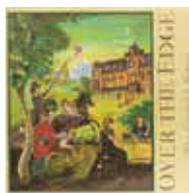
www.thebarnbirds.com

The Carrivick Sisters OVER THE EDGE

Self-released

★★★★★

Maturing with taste and bountiful talent



Devon-born twins show growing maturity with this, their fifth album. A mix of splendid ear-friendly folk, bluegrass and Americana songs and dazzling instrumentals, Charlotte and Laura have succeeded in their goal of making an enduring album. Apart from the traditional *Pretty Fair Damsel*, the songs and a pair of instrumentals have all been penned by the sisters, sometimes together, but occasionally singly. Charlotte's *I Know You* is highly personal and is almost certainly inspired by the sisters' move from their Salcombe family home to Bath and is marked by a slow, pretty melody and positive, uplifting lyric enhanced by gentle harmonies. *Making Horses*, an instrumental piece, again composed by Charlotte, demonstrates why these twins are simply two of the best young acoustic instrumentalists working today. The interplay between guitar and fiddle is as good as it gets by anyone out there making music.

The rhythmic pace and solidly country instrumentation provides a slight bluegrassy feel to *If You Asked Me To* with a touch of old-fashioned swing and vocal harmonies that recall the Andrew Sisters or even the Girls of the Golden West. *Man In The Corner* has a folky feel, with lyrics and a melody that has a sophisticated smoothness. Laura steps up to the mic and cruises along with pleasantly relaxed demeanour on the charming *Bird*, with her fiddle to the fore and again exquisite vocal harmonies. Acoustic folk and country never sounded so good. A work of subtle beauty from a young act that deserves to be watched. Both Charlotte and Laura play with a level of imagination, taste and authority that will awe many of their listeners, as well as their peers whilst their vocals, both shared leads and harmonies are at all times soulful, charming and totally captivating. **Alan Cackett**

www.thecarrivicksisters.com

The Dirty Guv'nahs SOMEWHERE BENEATH THESE SOUTHERN SKIES

Blue Rose BLU DP0601

★★★★★

A solid chunk of southern rock from Knoxville, Tennessee's six-piece roots trailblazers



The Dirty Guv'nahs may have recorded their third album release in Nashville, but the Knoxville, Tennessee, sextet couldn't be further from the accepted Music City production sound. They do, perhaps owe a debt to the alt.country sound of the late 1990s, with echoes of Wilco, Slobberbone and other recalcitrant bands of that era mingling with memories of the earlier Southside Johnny and the Asbury Dukes, the Rolling Stones, Bob Seger and the Black Crowes. Having played live virtually non-stop for the past seven years, including multiple appearances at the Southeastern Bonnaroo festival held annually in Manchester, Tennessee, the band released two independent albums, *THE DIRTY GUV'NAHS* (2009) and *YOUTH IS IN OUR BLOOD* (2010) before signing to German indie label Blue Rose Records for *SOMEWHERE BENEATH THESE SOUTHERN SKIES*.

Perhaps the Guv'nahs' most distinctive element is the belicose, soulful vocals of lead singer James Trimble, which kick off the album's pounding opener *Can You*