

Folk ROOTS

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THE HOLY MODAL ROUNDERS

The Holy Modal Rounders 1 & 2 Big Beat
CDWIKD 176

Students of sixties culture should recall that one of The Holy Modal Rounders more famous contributions to the music of that decade was the inclusion of their *Bird Song* on the soundtrack of the movie *Easy Rider*. While that 1969 recording afforded them genuine national profile, The Rounders had been legendary performers around the folk clubs of Greenwich Village half a decade earlier. This collection, with the addition of two previously unreleased tracks, brings together their two Prestige albums, dating respectively, from 1964 and 1965. This twenty-nine track set, is the second release in the ongoing series from Ace/Big Beat subtitled *Folk Roots Classics*.

The CD booklet includes a black and white reproduction of the front liner photograph of the original sleeves, along with a faithful reprint of each liner note. Phil Smee sheds further light on the history of Peter Stampfel and Steve Weber, with a detailed and upbeat, two-page essay. Stampfel was born in the Mid West, Wisconsin actually, circa 1938, while Weber, the younger by four years, was born and raised in Pennsylvania. Drawn to the Washington Square area of New York City, during the early sixties, Stampfel and Weber served their musical apprenticeships in a fluid series of aggregations. Once they joined forces, The Rounders mostly drew upon traditional folk and blues sources for material, while their old-timey style of presentation was augmented by lyrics that often modified, or discarded entirely the original words. As the contents of this release attest, their reputation for being different was principally founded on their use of surreal and humorous lyrics.

While the duo occasionally performed original material, they rarely wrote their own songs. Weber's *Hey, Hey Baby* and *Junko Partner* co-written with that alternative songwriter, Michael Hurley, are the only examples included here. Stampfel normally supported his vocal contributions with banjo and fiddle, while Weber furnished vocals and guitar. The Rounders did, however, manage to stamp their influence on mainstream pop music, as an intentionally commercially version of their arrangement of *Blues In The Bottle* was included on the 1965 Lovin' Spoonful album, *Do You Believe In Magic*.

The Stampfel penned liner notes of their debut set includes the contention "Mass communication will soon link the world together

as close as various parts of the United States are linked together now. And a worldwide popular music is going to happen sooner than you think." Prophets are rarely acknowledged in their own land, and during their lifetime. Holding that thought, this reissue furnishes the opportunity for a nineties audience to reassess a traditional folk duo whose concept was probably decades ahead of its time.

Arthur Wood.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Treasures Left Behind : Remembering

Kate Wolf Red House RHR CD 114

We lost Kate Wolf to leukaemia some twelve years ago. Since that sad event, Kate's music has been consistently lauded by her peers – Nanci Griffith opened her 1993 Grammy winning *Other Voices, Other Rooms* with Kate's *Across The Great Divide*, for example. This thoughtfully-executed collection deserves to be equally as successful. Produced by Wolf's long time side-person, Nina Gerber, this recording began as a solo project that was to include songs by Gerber's former boss.

The consummation is a fourteen-track selection, from artists who never met Kate, but have obviously been influenced by her legacy, through to performers who knew her well. While the latter group bring a personal insight of the writer to the song they interpret, Lucinda Williams and Emmylou Harris, for instance, do not trail far behind. Williams imbues *Here In California* with a wistful beauty, while Harris' voice has always possessed that edgy quality and *Love Still Remains* matches her best work.

Anyone familiar with Kate's 1985 collection *Poet's Heart* should know that the title song was written for and about her friend, fellow musician and Antipodean Scot, Eric Bogle. His rendition of *Cornflower Blue* is delivered with a love and memory that have faithfully endured the parting. *Thinking About You*, the closing track, is delivered acappella by former Joy of Cooking vocalist, Terry Garthwaite. The song, never released by Wolf, was written two decades ago in memory of the passing of Gil Turner (the first singer to

record a Bob Dylan tune, and the first to have an interview with the Hibbing troubadour published). During the early seventies, Turner and George Schroeder were instrumental in persuading Kate to become a working musician. They also inspired her to give voice to her muse. For anyone touched by the down to earth magic of Wolf's canon, *Thinking About You* is a homage that has now become, via Garthwaite's interpretation, Kate's epitaph. For from being lyrically maudlin and sentimental, it is a celebration of life. That was always Kate's way. Compared with other songwriter-oriented compilations that have appeared this year, to date, *Treasures Left Behind* is streets ahead in terms of content, quality and honesty. Available in the UK, via Koch International.

Arthur Wood

JACK HARDY

The Collected Works Of Jack Hardy (1965-1995) 1-800-Prime CD PCD 51 to PCD 60

It's been a long time comin' – fame, that is – but I guess Jack is well aware of that. This ten CD retrospective scours three decades of his work, in the process returning most of Jack's catalogue to print. *Early and Rare* includes seven of the eleven tracks from Hardy's 1971 self titled debut set, and is teamed with nine previously unreleased studio recordings from 1973 and 1974, three undated backstage recordings from

the Aspen Music Festival, and closes with a 1965 home recording. Although the original version of *Backyard In Kansas* has been omitted, the song is featured among the 1973 studio recordings. If the intention of this anthology was to capture the whole, unexpurgated Jack Hardy, then excepting his legion of *Fast Folk* contributions (some twenty tracks), the aforementioned three songs from *Jack Hardy*, and *Houston Street* from the 1989 Brambus compilation *Retrospective* (not included here) constitute the only visible omissions.

Many of the nine other discs reappear in exactly their original form, while a few feature additional tracks. In round terms, these extras total eight songs, or versions thereof, released here for the first time. Relative to his Swiss Brambus releases, or Jack's own Great Divide label pressings of the same recordings, *Through*, *Two Of Swords* and *Civil Wars* feature revised or new artwork

Hardy has, in his time, flirted with country music and, on an ongoing and regular basis, absorbed traditional sounding English and Irish rhythms into his compositions. The baseline however, has always been folk music. Available from 111 East 14th Street, Suite 300, New York, NY 10003, U.S.A.

Arthur Wood.

👉 **Frank Morey *BourbonSoakedHalo*** (Indigo Hamlet Music IHM 000-1) Tom Waits influenced lyrics about barflies, blue collar workers and low-life delivered by a hoarse, alcohol enriched voice. The nine songs run out at less than thirty minutes – almost making it an EP. PO Box 7430, Lowell, Mass. 01853, U.S.A.

👉 **Andy Kuncel *Too Quickly*** (Missing String Music MSM0201) From the get go, Kuncel's punk styled strumming and frenetic vocal delivery left me numb. Someone, somewhere will understand these verbal rambles, but it's going to be a desperately long search!

👉 **Jim Layeux *Earthlings*** (Stemwall Productions SDT0004) Canadian presents a pleasant selection of his own material and some traditional flavoured tunes. (149 Medland Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6P 2N4).

👉 **Various Artists *Floating Folk Festival Vol. 1 – A Compilation Of Richmond Artists*** (Planetary 9006) The acoustic music scene in Richmond, Virginia is currently young and evolving. Based on the content of these fourteen tracks, the "gotta listen to that cut, again and again" quotient is low. (Planetary Records, 2614 W. Cary Street, Richmond, Virginia 23220, U.S.A.)

🗨️ **Lisa Hunter *Flying*** (One Hand Clapping OMC 0017) The 12 tracks include an uptempo one that is titled *Nowhere Fast*. Enough said?
Available from One Hand Clapping, 2032
North Racine, Chicago, Illinois 60614, U.S.A.