## **NEW RELEASES**

## Dave McGraw & Mandy Fer SEED OF A PINE

Independent: BADGE008

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Comfortable

Americana on duo

debut that doesn't quite gel

There's something that isn't quite right about this album from a pair of American singer-songwriters. Separately they've both spent a fair few years going up and down the highways and byways of America, but this is their duo debut and it doesn't quite gel. Less than the sum of its parts, you might say.

McGraw is the larger presence, and he majors in wide open landscapes and those who inhabit them. His vivid vignettes work well, and when he turns it up a bit, as with the beefier, dirtier backbeat on Serotiny (May Our Music) that's good too. He also has a classic Americana voice which he uses to fine effect on the likes of opener So Comes The Day and Comin' Down. Fer's songs are more personal, more intense love songs. Unfortunately they're also weaker; songs to be admired rather than moved by.

All of this is hardly damning though, so what's the problem? It's that Fer's voice doesn't work too well with McGraw's, even when it's in the background. It's that the warm, intimate feel producer Zach Goheen has given the album doesn't really suit McGraw's songs. Mostly it's the sense that the album is just a bit too pleasant, a bit too keen on its comfort zone, and consequently doesn't really stand out from the crowd.

In the interests of fairness one should note that a number of other writers have, if not raved, certainly enthused about SEED OF A PINE, but for this reviewer it doesn't really work, and every time it was listened to, the wish for a solo McGraw album produced by Steve Earle was never far away. *Jeremy Searle* 

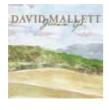
www.daveandmandymusic.com

## David Mallett GREENIN' UP

North Road Records

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Tending the land forms the subjective focus of this partial retrospective



The latest musical epistle from Mainer

David Mallett has been released in conjunction with the Maine Farmland Trust and finds the musician, principally, revisiting material from his back pages; the subjective focus: the natural world and tending the land. I said principally, since Fat Of The Land, Dogs & Horses and album closer Beautiful Rose are new creations. The first of the foregoing trio relates that 'Henry put in a bottom mile of beans' and 'He hoed and he hoed and watched them turn green.' In a subsequent verse, David temporarily diverts the focus with: 'Stop that fightin' quit them wars, get down to doin' what we come here for.' A travelling musician narrates the almost five minute-long. melodically insistent Dogs & Horses, while Beautiful Rose possesses a spiritual edge.

Taken from David's 1978 self-titled debut, GREENIN' UP opens with I Knew This Place, wherein an older person reflects upon his growing years, and muses: 'These tired legs I'm standing on, would scarcely dare to leave the spot upon which they're standing.' David was aged 27 when he penned the foregoing title, and it's followed by the farming and fishingthemed album title song which originally appeared on his 1999 Flying Fish Records collection AMBITION. No Mallett career retrospective would be complete without inclusion of his classic Garden Song. It first appeared on his debut album and again on PARALLEL LIVES (1997). The song has been covered by countless artists including Pete Seeger, Arlo Guthrie, the late John Denver and the Muppets. Translated and recorded in many languages, the song also inspired the children's book, Inch By Inch, published by Harper Collins.

Northern Lights made its public debut on OPEN DOORS & WINDOWS (1983). A paean to the dancing lights in the northern night sky, on this go-round the song bears the title Aurora Borealis. Sitting on the bank of a stream 'in the shade of this old tree,' a man, now mature in years, narrates the waltzpaced Summer Of My Dreams. Fishing is as vital part of the Maine economy as farming, and, as in Greenin' Up, both occupations are referenced in Mallett's early career creation Arrowsic. From David's album VITAL SIGNS (1986) there's the optimistic pairing of Good Times and April. Seasonally-tinged, April finds Mallett anticipate as well as reflect upon the seasons: '...she's a quicker dance, with a forward gaze and a backward glance.' Mallet's first three albums were released by Paul Noel Stookey's label,

Neworld Records, and from his sophomore set PENNSYLVANIA SUNRISE (1979) the annual harvest takes centre stage in The Haying Song. **Arthur Wood** 

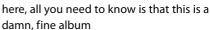
www.davidmallett.com

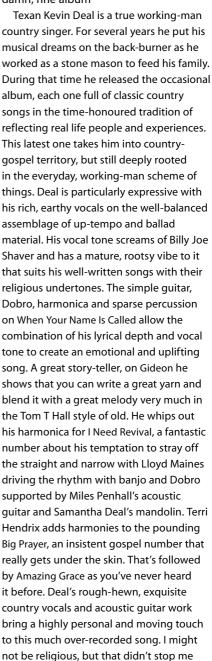
## Kevin Deal THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Blindfellow Records

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There's no need for creative metaphor





Alan Cackett

loving this album from beginning to end.

www.kevindeal.com