

...the new releases

of pals due to its authentic feel and downright tasty instrumentation. The same can be said of *Under The City Lights*. It sounds like a punkgrass track as it opens, but has the added benefit of having a tender and rather beautiful sound about it which could never be improved. I have always held the opinion that every great album should include a driving track in its duration, and in the case of this album *Never Gonna Let You Go* is the prime example of this. With a sound ideal for cruising down the once-great Lincoln Highway, the impressive singing is more than matched by some sublime playing which again could be described as an inspirational song for would-be musicians.

Having not heard of any Wisconsin artists before, I reckon the Madison community must revel in the fact that amongst them lies a musical great in the making. As long as Marty keeps producing a sound like the one which is evident in this album then that legendary tag must surely stick on him. **RH**
www.martyfinkel.com
www.myspace.com/martyfinkel

POG END OF THE SEASON

Beside the Birdbath Records BirdOI

★★★★★

Flying the flag high and proud for British music in an album that fires bullets of award winning gold at every opportunity

Astonishingly enough, this is the eighth album in nine years by the Brighton based four-piece band. Why hasn't this band become embraced by the general public sooner? Such recognition must surely come their way due to this release which is just pure middle-of-the-forehead genius.

Beginning on what sounds like pots and pans with some piano tinkling, *Time's Kind Fingers* has a minimalist sound to it. As the track progresses, it slyly builds up in pace which adds to the general wonderfulness which is created right before your very ears. Although the opening to *Survivor's Parade* can be described as a tad quiet, it begins to proceed into an almost Two Fingers of Firewater sound which I'm sure many have noticed prior to hearing this and is by all means a quite excellent feature of this song, but then there are tracks like *Coming Home* which simply blows your mind away. Borrowing so many elements from other musical forms, it seems to merge these styles together in a seamless way which is so impressive that it certainly leaves a lasting impression. With some slight double bass towards the track's end which is just ace, this has to be the finest track which must be heard to be truly believed. The unanswered question remains up for discussion; why has this band not become widely known? Such wrongs must surely be righted due to the release of this album. **RH**
www.pogband.co.uk
www.myspace.com/pogwash



Tom Conway NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

Late Arrival Records LACD04

★★★★★

Multi-style album that uses great instrumentation and hauntingly beautiful vocals to much success

There are many artists out there who unfortunately miss the radar. That in itself is a crime which must be avoided at all costs. UK singer-songwriter Tom Conway is certainly a perfect example of this type of artist, as those who haven't caught his work really are missing a master at work.

With a Tennessee Three sound about it, the only element *I Won't Think About You* is missing is some banjo or mandolin because if those instruments were included then you would have a bona fide bluegrass track. Despite this not being evident, what we are left with is some fine picking supported by some superb vocals. With an Americana sound running through its veins, *Hanging Around Waiting* has an attentive and immediately excellent feel about it that has the added bonus of some stonkingly good electric picking in its middle. Perhaps the finest track of the eleven is *You Never Said a Word*. A tongue-in-cheek tune at times, the pedal steel throughout is simply mind-blowing and, what with some Luther Perkins picking present during the entirety of this track, this sure is one hell of a tune to hear which if you ever are fortunate enough to catch live must be a memorable event.

It seems that this album is over just as you're waiting with baited breath for the start of the next track. Despite it consisting of eleven tracks, you find that towards the album's conclusion you want more of this guy. I shall certainly be waiting with quiet excitement until the next album is released. **RH**
www.tomconwaymusic.co.uk
www.myspace.com/tomconwaymusic



Phantom Limb PHANTOM LIMB

Naim Edge

★★★★

Phantom Limb put the soul back into country!

Phantom Limb are a fantastic medley of country and soul, with a resonating sound that will last decades long and beyond. The thing about this group is that they are all extremely talented, none more so than lead singer Yolanda Quartey and in every aspect the band extends into this three dimensional sound and build and build till they can get no fuller sound, no more extreme. This of course is only there on the record for a couple of the songs, and that in itself shows true musicianship, when the sound can be reined in and become unaffected in quality. The songs straddle southern soul, country blues and gospel with a renowned self-esteem and a quality that I just haven't put my finger on yet—maybe it's confidence and yet maybe it's just the carefully structured pattern



Leddra Chapman TELLING TALES

Independent

★★★★★

Stunning debut album from folk-pop songstress proves time and time again with each beautiful song, we do not lack young musical talent...



This stunning debut album is the work of English singer-songwriter Leddra Chapman. TELLING TALES is one of the greatest achievements this year in the young singer-songwriter category. It's exciting, exhilarating and just out-of-this-world joyous! Leddra Chapman (real name Anna Leddra Chapman) first picked up the acoustic guitar at the age of 12 and wrote her first song. Since then Leddra's life has never been the same as she pursued the career with adamant determination and found gigs for herself, age permitted. Leddra is now attending the London College of Music and as one of Quicksilver's European Ambassadors performs and models for them, most recently in the South of France. With lyrical content and vocal ability with a likening to Alanis Morissette and Amy Studt, this is certainly an album for any female singer-songwriter fans. With a tendency to play English folk-pop, the music encapsulates vocals, piano, strings and provides variety in lyrical content and musical ideas, that proves time and time again, we do not lack young musical talent. The first single *Story* is a wonderful opening to the album and will work as a magnificent introduction to Leddra's style and that flavour of English folk-pop that leaves her melting on the tip of your tongue. Her vocal style is often sultry and moody and at others bubbling with harmonies and contemplative thought, whilst her vocal range is scintillating. Songs such as *A Little Easier*, *Summer Song*, *Can't Keep Saving You* and *Jocelin* are all astounding and beautiful compositions, with elegant lyrical content and often a dramatic turn of events told through this young girl's eyes with detail and expression you'll feel privileged to know when you get to the end. I know there are many of our readers out there who adore the female singer-songwriters—you know who you are, watch the video for *Story* on her myspace—the journey starts there—you won't regret it! **LB**
www.myspace.com/leddrachapman

of the layer upon layer of dedicated musicianship that make this release special. Though I personally have not warmed very much to Yolanda's soulful voice there are songs that suit better than others for me, and the downbeat, acoustic glow of *Good Fortune* really strikes a chord. Packed with variety, including fantastic tracks like *Don't Say A Word* and *I'll Never Be The Same Again* don't miss out on this awesome group that have certainly put soul back onto the country map with justifiable success. **LB**
www.myspace.com/phantomlimbrobot

Willard Grant Conspiracy PAPER COVERS STONE

Loose

★★★★

Stripped-down reinterpretation of Gothic Americana exponents

Re-recording your old songs is a tricky business, partly because of the potential fan reaction but mostly because of the difficulty of knowing what to do with them—after all didn't you get it right the first time? As if realising that, Robert Fisher, the front man, writer and one constant in the Conspiracy's swirling line-up has also included three new pieces, of which more anon.

With one exception the older tracks are taken from the band's last three albums and all are delivered in stripped-down acoustic format, often in stark contrast to how they originally appeared. WGC have always been the masters of noir-ish Americana and that is still the case here, but despite the occasional interesting intrusion of the likes of musical saws the similarity of presentation renders the album somewhat homogenous and quite heavy listening, something put into stark relief by one of the newbies, *Preparing For the Fall*. This appears halfway through and while not being

a better song than any of the other offerings and in fact not as good as the likes of *Mary Of The Angels* (though still pretty damn fine), is driven by waves of intense electric guitar to a place that the laid-back treatments elsewhere never quite attain. Fisher's magnificently deep voice still is as dominating as ever but ironically only on the lighter take on *Fare Thee Well* does he really achieve anything interestingly different from the original versions of the songs.

As a recent 'Best Of' introduction to the band the album works well and all three new songs whet the appetite for their next proper outing but fans who have the earlier records will find little to tempt them here. **JS**
www.willardgrantconspiracy.com

Matt Harlan TIPS & COMPLIMENTS

Berkalin Records

★★★★★

Best debut solo album by Texas bred singer-songwriter I've heard in many a year

Harlan hails from Boerne, Texas and has variously resided and performed in Austin, San Antonio and Houston. Currently based out of the Gulf Coast city for the second time, the thirteen song TIPS & COMPLIMENTS is his debut release and was co-produced by Rich Brotherton (Robert Earl Keen, Caroline Herring) and Michael Mikulka. The sessions took place at Brotherton's Ace Recording in Austin, and Mikulka's Richmond, Texas based Lucky Run Studio. Back in 2003 Matt won the state-wide Texas University Songwriters Competition and already has a couple of finalist slots in Kerrville's New Folk Songwriting Contest under his belt. In mid-May 2009, Matt justifiably placed in the top four at the Wildflower! Arts & Music Festival's Songwriting Contest.



Dusty Relics - Re-issues & Compilations

couple from that back catalogue—both from his days on MCA when the label's hopes were high that he was going to be the 'next big thing.' In reality he was too 'rough around the edges' for mainstream success, but he's enjoyed a long and fruitful career despite all that.

DOWN ON THE DRAG dates from 1979 and features the classic Joe Ely Band—Lloyd Maines, Ponty Bone, Jesse Taylor, Steve Keeton and Gregg Wright—and includes such great tracks as *Fools Fall In Love, Standin' At The Big Hotel, Maria* and the title song. Ely's live performances have become legendary, and he has released a live album roughly every ten years. The Joe Ely Band as an electric country-rock outfit designed to play uptempo honky-tonk music for dancing audiences, proved to be a very popular live act, not only in Texas, but also Europe. LIVE SHOTS, released in 1980 was recorded in England whilst Ely and his band were touring, often in the company of the Clash, whom he'd befriended in 1979. It was mainly songs taken from his first three albums—JOE ELY, HONKY TONK MASQUERADE and DOWN ON THE DRAG—plus a great version of Hank Williams' *Honky Tonkin* with Carlene Carter adding vocal support, *Midnight Shift* and the bluesy medley—*Long Snake Moan*. It still remains as a classic live album almost thirty years on. **AC**
www.bgo-records.com

Lucinda Williams
RAMBLIN'
Retroworld
FLOATM6019

★★★★
HAPPY WOMAN
BLUES
Retroworld
FLOATM6020

★★★★
Where it all began for Miss
Misunderstood ...

I recall buying these two albums on vinyl almost thirty years ago and this is the first I've heard them in at least ten or fifteen years. They are Lucinda's first two albums for Smithsonian/Folkways and it has to be said that they didn't exactly set the world on fire, but they did acquire discerning fans. The Louisiana-born Williams, a true wandering folkie, initially made an impact on country music mainly as a songwriter with Mary Chapin Carpenter cutting *Passionate Kisses*, Patty Loveless covering *The Night's Too Long* and Emmylou Harris reviving *Sweet Old World*. Then around ten years ago she made something of a minor commercial breakthrough with the Grammy-winning *CAR WHEELS ON A GRAVEL ROAD*. Since then she's built and maintained a sizeable audience for her rootsy, Americana-based music—and the chances are that the majority of them have never heard these two albums, now reissued on CD.

RAMBLIN' recorded at the Malaco

Studios in Jackson, Mississippi in September 1978, is a collection of old blues and country tunes given stripped-down renditions by Lucinda (vocals and 12-string guitar) assisted by guitarist John Grimaudo. Old blues tunes such as Memphis Minnie's *Me And My Chauffeur* and Robert Johnson's *Stop Breakin' Down* sit comfortably alongside Hank Williams' *Jambalaya* and the Carter Family's *Little Darling Pal of Mine*. Her voice, an uncanny combination of hillbilly dropout and graceful old-world blues siren, has the arresting effect of a rusty knife blade cutting through butter.

Less than two years later Lucinda recorded *HAPPY WOMAN BLUES* in Houston, Texas. This time it was all her own self-penned songs with a band comprising Mickey White (acoustic and electric guitars), Rex Bell (bass), Ira Wilkes (drums), Mickey Moody (pedal steel) and Malcolm Smith (fiddle and viola). Vocally, she was much more assured and the music aches with heartbreak and loneliness. Even when she turns her attentions away from romantic woes, her songs still deal with loss, yearning souls. She revisited her Louisiana roots with the Cajun-styled *Lafayette*, and there's definitely a touch of country on songs such as *I Lost It* (which she revived for her *CAR WHEELS* album) and *Rolling Along* with the predominantly sweet steel guitar licks. Although she is closely identified with the Austin, Texas, music scene, Lucinda Williams' music has always defied categories to an unusual degree. Grounded in country, on these albums she seamlessly mixed blues, folk, country and rock with poetic lyrics. **AC**
www.fwrecords.co.uk

Pete Seeger
LIVE IN '65
Appleseed
Recordings
★★★★☆
Seeger captured in concert at half the age he is today

This two disc live set features a Carnegie Hall performance by Pete. Unlike his celebrated 1963 live album recorded in the New York City venue (of that name) for CBS Records, in this instance it's the Carnegie Music Hall in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on Saturday February 20, 1965. Seeger was forty-five years old at the time. On May 3 this year Pete Seeger celebrated his ninetieth birthday.

On this recently discovered recording Pete and his banjo begin with a rendition of Stephen Foster's *Oh Susanna*. Foster was born and lived in Lawrenceville, now a suburb of Pittsburgh. Maintaining the theme of locally-penned songs Seeger continues with the sad lament *He Lies In An American Land*—written by a co-worker after an immigrant was killed in a steelworks' accident during the week that his wife and family arrived in the New World—and *Oleanna* which parodies celebrated

violinist Ole Bull's (b. 1810, d. 1880) failed New Norway community in northern Pennsylvania. Describing love songs as 'permanently topical' this folk musician's chosen examples are the risqué *Uh, Uh, Uh* and *Never Wed An Old Man*.

Exchanging his banjo for a twelve-string guitar, Pete's composition *All Mixed Up* proves to be a celebration of mankind's commonality. Standouts on Disc 1 are the prayer for peace *I Come And Stand At Every Door* narrated by a child who perished in the atomic firestorm that engulfed Hiroshima, *The Freedom Come-All-Yes* penned by the great and now late Scot Hamish Henderson, plus the penultimate *Turn! Turn! Turn!* a biblical song that Pete wrote. Some nine months later the latter composition, recorded by the Byrds, reached number one on the US pop chart and remained there for three weeks.

The sixteen songs on Disc 1 are accompanied by fifteen more on Disc 2, as Seeger's global smorgasbord of music merges traditional *This Little Light Of Mine* and *Greensleeves* and contemporary material *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall* and *This Land Is Your Land*, with self-penned songs *The Bells Of Rhymney*, *Guantanamo* and *Where Have All The Flowers Gone*. A Pete Seeger concert is much, much more than a collection of songs, his history, geography and anthropology rich narrations—between and during songs—make for an edifying experience. The world is truly a richer place for the music performed by this caring and peace-loving human being. **AW**
<http://www.peteseegermusic.com/>

Poco
DELIVERIN'/
CRAZY EYES
BGO Records
BG0CD720

★★★★
SEVEN/
CANTAMOS
BGO Records
BG0CD721

★★★★
Classic country-rock from the 1970s underrated pioneers

Pioneers of the country-rock sound that soared out of California in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Poco was the inspiration for bands like the Eagles, Firefall, the Flying Burrito Brothers, Pure Prairie League, Little River Band and the Ozark Mountain Daredevils, as well as the new breed of country-rock acts. Despite several personnel changes Poco were always one of the very best country-rock bands, way ahead of the Eagles, and all those that followed, yet major commercial success always eluded them. Listening to these four albums from the early 1970s, now reissued in BGO's 2on1 series, it's hard to think why. They could rock with the best of them, harmonies are spot on, songs are interesting, musicianship is of an incredibly high standard ... and

so on.

DELIVERIN' was the band's third album, and was recorded live in Boston and New York in 1971. Naturally, the bulk of the songs on this live album were taken from the band's first two studio albums, but Poco were one of the absolute best live acts of all time. Every show was dynamic, unpredictable—full of soaring harmonies, astounding instrumentation and tight, uplifting sound. This comes through loud and clear on DELIVERIN', even songs about soured romance or life's twists and turns were exhilarating. CRAZY EYES moves us on to the end of 1973 and was their sixth album. It's classic Poco country-rock with Rusty Young's pedal steel guitar very much to the fore. The title tune, written by Richie Furay, was about the late Gram Parsons, and they also include Gram's *Brass Buttons*, but if you want to hear where the Eagles got their sound and style from just listen to the gorgeous *Here We Go Again*.

SEVEN and CANTAMOS were both released in 1974, the second a somewhat hurriedly put together collection released to fulfil Poco's contract with Epic Records before they moved on the next year to ABC Records. Though both albums have been too hurriedly dismissed by critics, they've always been two of my favourite Poco albums. Rusty, previously something of a junior member of the band, was basically the only original one left and he came very much to the fore, especially with the intricate *Rocky Mountain Breakdown* (SEVEN) and *Sagebrush Serenade* (CANTAMOS). If you want to hear Poco at their best, check out the edgy and eerie lode of *Susannah*. The song is so simple it hurts. What carries the music is the easy confident way the group string their instrumental lines together. Their vocal harmonies are strained but soulful. But don't just sit there reading this, if you have yet to discover the timeless magic of Poco, waste not a minute more, go out and get a hold of these albums. I guarantee that you will not be disappointed. **AC**
www.bgo-records.com

Songs From
The Blue
House
TREE
High Barn
Records-HB02011

★★★★
Great album from this fantastic British folk group

Musically and atmospherically very different from their album TOO, TREE is still just as good. This CD was originally released in 2007 and one of my favourite tracks then, was their super version of the Blue Oyster Cult classic (*Don't Fear*) *The Reaper*. It came over so well as a psychedelic folk tune with the brilliantly haunting vocals of James Partridge supported superbly with banjo and fiddle from Tony Winn and Richard Lockwood