

possibly to emphasise the collective nature of the endeavour, Oberst splits the writing credits with his bandmates, who contribute almost half the songs on this seventy-minute epic. Said bandmates, while clearly competent, seem devoid of any sort of spark, so apart from Oberst's Dylan-isms for the most part OUTER SOUTH is relatively straight ahead country-rock, not good, not bad, merely there. Exceptions include the incendiary protest of *Roosevelt Room*, which is replete with squalling guitar and the spirit of raw'n'roll and the mournful *White Shoes*, a still of the night plea to a lover. Even good songs like these though are thrown a curve ball by the sequencing, as the latter's mood is instantly shattered by the immediately following *Bloodline*, a positively jaunty swing around the country boundaries.

It's hard to see what the point of this album, or indeed the whole Mystic Valley adventure, is. There are any number of people doing this sort of thing much better than Oberst, and he seems to have abandoned what he does better than any number of people, namely the experimenting with form and the pushing of boundaries. Add to that the handing over of significant responsibilities to (lesser) band mates and the sense of musician's block, if there is such a thing, is impossible to avoid. Unlike this album, fortunately. **JS**
www.conoroberst.com

**Dale Watson
And His Lone
Stars
THE TRUCKIN'
SESSIONS
VOLUME 2**

Me And My
Americana
Records-
MMACD1039

★★★★

Good old country driving music

Dale Watson has been churning out real solid country music for a good few years now, resulting in a batch of top class albums full of fire and passion, as he makes a stand for the older country artists that have been forgotten by Nashville, at the same time berating the Music Row hierarchy who refuse to acknowledge them in favour of the pretty young singers who are passed off as country artists nowadays.



This CD is a follow-up to his 1998 THE TRUCKIN' SESSIONS album, but there are a few re-recordings of tracks that have been on previous releases such as *Truck Stop In La Grange* and *Hey Driver*. Of the newer songs some seem to be lacking that certain Dale Watson spark that gives his music spirit and feeling, worst being 10-4 which is probably the weakest Dale song I have ever heard. Still a fine album of honest and real country music, but not his best. **DK**
www.dalewatson.com

**David Parmley
& Continental
Divide
3 SILVER
DOLLARS**

Pinecastle Records
PRC 1168

★★★★☆

Superb album offers evidence that bluegrass is loved and enjoyed by the artists

Fronted by one of the founding members of the hugely successful bluegrass band Bluegrass Cardinals, David Parmley has again struck gold by surrounding himself with some quite excellent musicians that show to the world that Parmley has got the Midas touch for forming highly talented bands. Although having been around now for over a decade, this album just shows that they are by no means running out of creativity and flare for continuing to produce some quite beautiful music.

Beginning with an authentic bluegrass sound, *Anniversary Of The Blues* is tenderly sung which seems very reminiscent of Johnny Cash's gentler tracks. Despite the fiddling being quite sparse, it is a track which makes the eyes weep and the body slowly sway from side to side in tune with its harmonic genius. With fiddling so good that it makes you want to holler just to let the world know that everyone must simply hear of this song's existence. *What You Can See From Your Knees* includes angelic harmonies that would give the Louvin Brothers cause for doubt. With simplistic acoustic strumming, this is a track just like the previously mentioned; so good it makes you want to shout so loud that it ends up making you lose your voice. With a honky-tonk beginning, *God Reached Down* has a folk sound to it albeit



with a huge bluegrass influence. With a groovy baritone vocal, the acoustic guitar picking supplied by Parmley is to be congratulated here with the instrumentation more than amply worthy of being on par with the harmonies.

With no scheduled gigs setting foot outside North America, this is a band which would bring the house down over here in Blighty. Their love for bluegrass, as well as the ability to perform it to such a level that it makes you want to shout to the rooftops demanding whoever is nearby to come and listen to these tracks, would surely sell out any venue in which they found themselves booked to play. I sure hope a UK tour happens. **RH**
www.davidparmleyandcontinentaldivide.com

**Doyle Lawson
& Quicksilver
LONELY
STREET**

Rounder Records

★★★★

Lonely Street comes out strong and meaningful for Rounder Records

The sound of bird calls introduces *Monroe's Mandolin*, the opening cut penned by Virginia and Vernon Long, a tribute to Lawson's lifelong musical hero and the founding father of bluegrass. The track ends with a couple of bars of lightning quick Bill Monroe-style mandolin licks. Following stints with Jimmy Martin, J. D. Crowe and the Country Gentleman, Lawson began making recordings in his own name during the late 1970s and to date has cut some three dozen titles, mostly with his band Quicksilver. Some of the current members of Quicksilver weren't even born when Doyle launched his solo recording career, thereby giving witness to Lawson's handing down of Monroe's legacy. A quintet, Lawson and Quicksilver specialise in three-part harmony with Doyle (mandolin, guitar), Darren Beachley (guitar) and Carl White (bass) taking turns as tenor, baritone and lead vocalist. For each of the twelve songs featured, Lawson has penned a short insightful liner note regarding the writer(s), where he first heard the song or the reason for recording it. The only band original, an instru-



mental, *Down Around Bear Cove*, was co-penned by Lawson and Josh Swift (resophonic guitar). Among the mix of songs that focus on love (including the lyrically twee *Johnny And Sally*), stormy winds and hard times, Carl Jackson co-wrote *Oh Heart, Look What You've Done* with Russ Roberts, there's a reading of Marty Robbins' *Call Me Up And I'll Come Callin' On You*, while Doyle's vocal is rather nasal on *The Human Race* a call for environmental sanity, and also on the later cut *My Real World Of Make Believe*. The disc closes with *When The Last Of Our Days Shall Come* a gospel number penned by Merlefest Chris Austin Songwriting Contest winner Chris Stuart. **AW**
www.rounder.com

**Eddi Reader
LOVE IS THE
WAY**

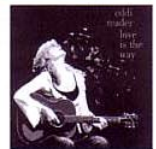
Rough Trade

★★★★

As the title suggests, a romantic collection from talented singer-songwriter

Two acoustic guitars launch Boo Hewerdine's waltz-paced *Dragonflies*, a four verse treatise on the fleeting and fragile nature of life. One guitar is plucked, while the finger-picked other carries the melody. Twenty seconds in sideman Roy Dodds' drums and percussion join the fray and as the remainder of this five-minute long opening track unfolds, little by little, Teddy Borowiecki adds a virtual orchestra pit of instruments. The Canadian has contributed to a few of Reader's recordings beginning with her 1994 self-titled disc, and has even co-written with EddiNbut not here. Borowiecki has recorded extensively with Jane Siberry and k d lang. Hewerdine also supplies the second selection *Silent Bells* - 'All that we are without love are silent bells' - and it is followed by *New York City* the first of three songs in this collection penned by Eddi's partner John Douglas. *New York City* simply celebrates being there. Alan Kelly's accordion features prominently in the latter pairing, and also in Hewerdine's happy-go-lucky *Dandelion* which follows. On Reader's previous album, PEACETIME, Declan O'Rourke penned the lilting *Galileo* (*Someone Like You*). His contribution on this go-round is the album title track, a mellow, gently paced love song.

Sweet Mountain (*Of Love*) was penned by living legend Brian Wilson and sometime collaborator David Sandler. During the early 1970s, in the guise of American Spring, it was recorded by Marilyn Wilson (Wilson's then wife) and her sister Diane Rovell. While their version tipped a nod to Phil Spector's production style, Reader's version is somewhat low key. Eddi's quirkily worded remembrance *Queen Of Scots* - 'You told me I was good luck, I'm seventeen in Kilmarnock' - segues with some of Lindsey Buckingham's words but mostly the melody to his *Never Going Back Again*, while with a sly wink the *Over It Now* lyric - a Reader/Hewerdine collaboration - alludes to



**Barty
TWO KINDS OF FOOL**

Terrapin TRP-CD 1608

★★★★

Brit country-rock fun but never foolish

Not, perhaps, a name to make you sit up but this is a corking, quirky, country album by a face many would know. Barty is actually Ian Bartholomew, one of Britain's leading character actors who you'll have seen in everything from spy thriller *Spooks* to sit-com *Hardware*, although he's also a regular on the stage. More pertinently, he's also been a regular on harmonies and acoustic guitar in the band of Britain's most inventive country guitarist, singer and producer, Wes McGhee, for many a year. (He's also Vince in *Vince and the Viletones*, a Barty-Wes annual Christmas party turn).

This, then, is the solo album, but also a kind of team-up. Barty has written a number of the songs and plays guitar and much else while Wes plays more guitars, bajo sexto, Dobro, and bass. The result is a record, which sounds as if it was the work of many (thanks to Wes' production skills, which have achieved to the same result on records such as Terry Clarke's *NIGHT RIDE TO BIRMINGHAM*.) There's an impressive breadth of material, from Barty's own expansive piano ballad, *Some Kinds Of Love*, through a brave yet effective acoustic go at Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here* to a simple, rocking version of Jack Clement's *It'll Be Me*. A couple of McGhee classics—*No Angel On My Wing* and *Whisky Is My Driver*—are given new life, sitting neatly alongside Barty's 1950s pop-rock number *Velma, Don't Break My Radio*. There's more, but you get the picture. Good songs well played by people who sound as if they're having a good time, and with an off-the-wall attitude which makes it all special. **ND**
www.properdistribution.com

