

NEW RELEASES

Aengus Finnan ONCE UPON A TIME

Centre Stage
Productions

★★★★☆

*A delightfully
accomplished live album of mainly new
songs by one of Canada's finest*

This almost 70-minute long album was recorded in concert in Grafton, Ontario on a stormy rain-drenched evening back in May 2004. Aengus Finnan (lead vocals, acoustic guitar) is supported throughout by David Rogers (acoustic guitar, vocals) and Trevor Mills (bass, mandolin, vocals), with occasional support from Jory Nash (vocals), Sahra Featherstone (fiddle) and Gregg Lawless (slide guitar). Finnan's *Apple Blossom Tyme* lyric, a tale of unrequited love, alludes to 'the Shelter Valley' where his Irish immigrant family settled and set up an organic farm and also mentions the nearby: 'high hills of Grafton.' Aengus was schooled in the town, thereby making this a homecoming concert. The latter song/album opener is one of a handful here from Aengus' 2002 sophomore set *NORTH WIND* as is the ensuing *Ruins*. Therein a mature-in-years farmer, on the eve of his farm being auctioned, reflects upon his life: 'If I had a young man's pride, no one alive would take this from me.' Finnan mentions that his interest in the melancholy can be dated by songs heard while a youngster. Accompanied vocally by Messrs. Rogers and Mills, he performs an a cappella arrangement of the traditional *As I Roved Out*.

Marvelling at his parent's faith in emigrating to Canada, *The Irish Settler Lad* weds a touching and heartfelt poem by Mark Finnan to a tune, written immediately before the show that evening, by his musician son. Before the advent of steamboats, the last three-masted schooner to sail on the Great Lakes is recalled in Finnan's *The Julia B. Merrill*. Launched in 1872 she was torched in 1931, a custom (for old schooners) at the time, that marked the end of the annual Canadian National Exhibition. From his 1999 debut disc *FOOL'S GOLD* Aengus reprises *Fly Away*, his first composition penned when still a school teacher in Moosonee near James Bay, North Ontario, and follows with the new song *Nightfall*. Steve Slade's *Saskatchewan Rose* is a delightfully melodic waltz, and with vocal support from Nash it's followed by *Marco*



Polo, another seafaring related tale. Penned by Hugh Jones of Liverpool folk quartet The Spinners, this arrangement embraces Aengus' additional lyric.

Performed a cappella *Swing Boys Swing*, from *NORTH WIND*, pays tribute to the railroad workers who brought the iron horse to Canada. Informing the audience that there are two types of love song—'Love gone wrong and love gone terribly wrong'—Aengus delivers the gently reflective *Once Upon A Time*, and, narrated by a miner, follows with his David Newland co-write *When The Whistle Blows*. From *NORTH WIND* there are renditions of *Rollin' Home* and *My Heart Has Wings*. The former based on a happening Aengus witnessed in a Husky truck-stop east of Thunder Bay, while on the latter he's joined vocally by the audience. Recalling that he grew up listening to the music of a Canadian folk legend Finnan closes with his tribute paean *Lightfoot*. **Arthur Wood**

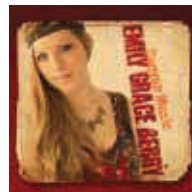
www.myspace.com/aengusfinnan

Emily Grace Berry CANYON MUSIC

Steady Boy SB 0040

★★★★

*The sound of summer
in Texas*



Berry is a new voice to come out of Texas, treading a fine line that helps her steer clear of being simply a singer-songwriter, or of being a conventional country singer. The latest protégé of Texas maestro Freddie Krc, Berry manages to mix tuneful pop and the best California country with an element of British 1960s flower-power folk and dose of Texan imagination to create a gentle, toe-tapping collection. Of course it helps that Krc is here on drums and guitar, and two of his Freddie Steady 5 cohorts, splendid guitarist Cam King and bassist Layton DePenning, are central to the music, along with keyboard star Floyd Domino and pedal steel whiz Marty Muse. They provide the backdrop for Berry's soft yet powerful vocals.

All of the new songs are co-written by Berry and Krc and, as a result, have that tuneful poppishness that he does so well. There are some beautiful, catchy numbers, particularly *When We Meet Again* and *Way Back When*. As for covers, there's a dreamy, pedal-steel led go at Buddy Holly's *Wishin'*, and an understated but rocking run through of *Maybe Mexico*, by Jerry Jeff

Walker, who she apparently duetted with at a festival more than a decade ago when she was a mere slip of a schoolgirl—and Krc was drummer, and spotted a star in the making. **Nick Dalton**

www.steadyboyrecords.com

Jerry Naylor CRICKETS DON'T EVER CHANGE

Palawan Productions

★★★★☆

*Rock'n'roll revisited
with new recordings
and a few new songs ...*



Jerry Naylor is an oft-overlooked rock'n'roll legend. The Texas singer and musician stepped in as the Crickets' lead singer back in 1960 and handled most of the vocals for the group's Liberty recordings, including such UK hit singles as *Don't Ever Change*, *My Little Girl* and *Don't Try To Change Me*. Since those heady days he's flitted in-and-out of showbusiness including radio, television, a stint as a country singer and more recently setting up the Rockabilly Legends Foundation which awards scholarships to talented but impoverished students. This newly-recorded album finds him looking back 50 years with new versions of many of the songs he originally recorded with the Crickets along with a handful of newer songs very much in the same style.

With a line up of musical accolades to his credentials, Naylor really knows every aspect of writing and performing and it shows throughout these 18 tracks. My advance copy doesn't include any musician or songwriting credits but the sound and production is top quality. He handles such lesser-known Crickets' songs as *I'm Not A Bad Guy*, *Teardrops Fall Like Rain* and *Lonely Avenue* with great skill. His renditions are made all the more effective by their electrified production, an indication that these songs are still valuable today. He also turns in a great version of *That'll Be The Day* aping the Holly mannerisms but adding a modern edge. Amongst the new songs is the appealing *I Still Love You Peggy Sue* and *I Was There When Rock Was Born*. I particularly enjoyed his heartfelt interpretation of the acoustic ballad *Richest Man*. Though aimed squarely at ageing rock'n'rollers, I must say that this turned out to be a most enjoyable 60 minutes of listening pleasure.

Alan Cackett

www.jerrynaylor.com