

BRUM

55p

the midlands music monthly and more!

BEAT

silver machine

max helps hawkwind celebrate 25 years of strange trips & pipe dreams

october 1995 issue 175



the levellers

steve adams gets it straight

plus:
rachel's basement... emmylou harris...
i am the law... the essential gig guide...
the hottest demo column in town...
...news ... reviews...

the pleasure
principal
john kennedy's
audience with the king



recorded delivery

a guide to the brum beat star ratings

★★★★ The meaning of life captured on magnetic tape ★★★★★ You owe it to yourself to own this

★★★ Tempting, but a tape of a mate's will do ★★ Have a listen then decide ★ Obsessives only

A-ONE

Free Association (Indochina)

There's a wonderfully jazzy, laid-back vibe going on here. A-One is actually the brainchild of jazz wizard, Duncan Millar, and this is his extremely chill-some debut album. The Beastie Boys will be sampling it before ya know it. Beautiful.

★★★★ B.Lee

AFTERLIFE

Afterlife (Ripe Recordings)

This album has been around some time in fact, though its moment is only just arriving. And that's due in no small part to the adoption of cut four, Byzantium as the summer anthem in Ibiza's hippest and most influential bars, cafes and clubs. That cut is, understandably available as a six mix EP though the discerning will bag the album to get the whole fifty minute swim through one of the best musical stress busters available.

★★★★ Sam Mitchell

CHRISTINE ALBERT

Underneath The Lone Star Sky (dos Records / Direct Distribution)

Musically, Christine's a country girl. She composed seven of the eleven cuts [some as co-writes]. Of the covers, Albert's rendition of Jimmy LaFave's 'Everytime' is stunning, while 'Are We There Yet Mama' is a humorous play on the question which the kids always ask, as soon as you lock the front door. John Tirro and Walter Hyatt of Uncle Walt's Band fame penned the latter tune. Local pal, LaFave duets on 'Get You Alone', one of her own compositions. If Christine is Austin's current Queen of Country, then Betty Elders most surely holds the equivalent folk crown. They got their heads together and composed the atmospheric and spiritually uplifting ballad, 'Cool River'. New Mexico recalls the [late teen] years she spent in that South Western state, while the closing cut 'Son Shine' is without a doubt inspired by her little boy, Troupe.

★★★★ Arthur Wood

THE BEAT

BPM - The Very Best Of The Beat (Arista)

The way overdue best of CD from the Two Tone stalwarts simply crackles

with a pop exuberance that you'd all but believe had been put out to pasture. The fact that the corporate accountants have deemed this one worthy of a TV ad campaign suggests that there's a large enough nerve to be touched in that area too. And quite right; whether your CD player's shuffle function lands on 'Mirror In The Bathroom', 'Stand Down Margaret' (and hey, it's only a name change away from pertinent), 'Twist & Crawl', 'Save It For Later' ... whatever, that distinctive shuffling ska'll lift your spirits.

Early birds will find a 'More Beats Per Minute 12"' remix CD snuggling in the package too - for free.

★★★★ Sam Mitchell

BARRY BLACK

Barry Black (Alias)

Alias in fact Erich Bachmann of Archers of Loaf aided and abetted by assorted gents with trumpets, fiddle, cello, upright bass, vibes and piano, on what's an almost exclusively instrumental album that ranges between what could be a Balkan folk dance to a drunken New Orleans marching band, from lo fi midnight tumbling waltzes to sonic distortion. A pinch of Beefheart seems to have been on the ingredients somewhere in the mix, but if you can imagine a stoned front porch jug band you'll not be far off the full picture.

★★ Mike Davies

CHINA CRISIS

Acoustically Yours (Telegraph)

The latest 80s band to try a comeback through the unplugged route, this is actually the first live album from the Liverpool outfit who, on and off, have managed to knock up thirteen years in the business without ever hitting the big leagues. Lacking any real identity to Gary Daly and Eddie Lundon's vocals it was more the songs and arrangements than the performances that provided what few highlights they experienced, and it's much the same here with 'Black Man Ray', 'King In A Catholic Style', 'Thank You', and their biggest hit, 'Wishful Thinking' providing the better moments. 'Diary Of A Hollow Horse', like many, gets a laid back jazzy treatment and, while the voices are colourless, the result's inoffensive enough if you happen to fancy a watered down poor man's Steely Dan.

★★ Mike Davies

GUY CLARK

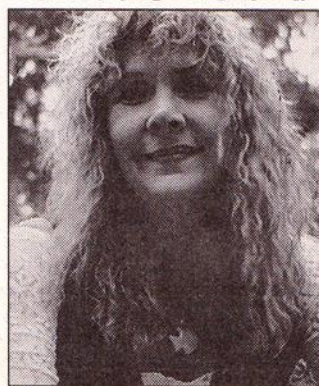
Craftsman (Philo / Direct Distribution)

Hot on the heels of probably his finest ever recording, 'Dublin Blues', comes this stoke of genius and deliverance of true justice. Stroke of genius in titling the 2CD set, 'Craftsman'. No finer word could have been created, selected or carved out, which better describes this giant among contemporary American folk songwriters. Deliverance of justice, since Guy's Warner Brothers catalogue ... Guy Clark, South Coast of Texas and 'Better Days' ... is finally available on CD, albeit reissued by Philo. If you purchased these classics back in the fading days of vinyl, you won't require my prompting to upgrade your collection. If you're a newcomer to Mr. Clark's work, here's the opportunity you've been waiting for. A compilation featuring the well weighed words and music of a man whom America would do well to laud as a national treasure ...

★★★★★ Arthur Wood

BETTY ELDERS

Crayons (Flying Fish [Import])



Here's a selection of thirteen [almost all new] poems and tunes from Betty's acoustic sketchbook. 1993's 'Peaceful Existence' saw Elders emerge from a self imposed, year long performing hibernation. A number of the songs on the latter collection, written during that hiatus, explored the reasons why etc. Circa '95 there's still occasional evidence of fragility, both in Betty's vocal performance and her lyrical content. Permeating the remainder is that Elder's hallmark, intensity. Balanced on this occasion, with strong evidence of the passing of previous self doubts. None of the latter are weaknesses,

rather, they are the towering strengths of Betty Elders, songwriter and human being. For instance ... 'My Father's Home' is a truly heartrending ode to heredity. Having been adopted at birth, the narrator tells of an as yet unfulfilled search for true family identity. The line "'Tis sure my heart would know his voice" appears in the third verse and in the final one. Elders' voice wavers and almost breaks on the second occasion. Now that's what I call, honesty.

★★★★ Arthur Wood

ELVIS COSTELLO

Blood And Chocolate (Demon)

The last instalment in the reissue / restoration of the great man's early catalogue may sound a damn sight better but it's no easier to listen to than on its 1986 release. It's a claustrophobic, almost impenetrable swirl of sound; a band playing at full tilt barely captured on almost overloading tape. The material at times is just as foreboding; 'Tokyo Storm Warning' is a relentless six and a half minutes that astonishingly was once considered as singles material whilst 'I Want You' is as venomous as a love song ever got.

In keeping with the rest of the catalogue Elvis has dusted off half a dozen 'rarities' for bonus duty. Notable are 'Seven Day Weekend', his duet with Jimmy Cliff from a long lost Robin Williams flick and 'A Town Called Big Nothing', his cod spaghetti western theme featuring hid dad on trumpet.

And if you haven't had time to read the reissue albums' copious Costello penned notes, there's a seventy eight minute interview disc shrinkwrapped to initial quantities available from Virgin.

★★★ Steve Morris

EVOLUTION

A Short Story (Warp)

Sounding like a Detroit diversion of Aphex Twin's early Analogue Bubblebath style of electronica, Tom Middleton and Mark Pritchard were involved in every track either as mixer, producer or actual artist and the sublime network of tunes from names like Reload, Global Communications, Link, Rebus and The Jedi Knights. The thumping rhythm and heavenly female vocals on 'Pesci' by Reload sends me to Heaven, but the whole LP is an icy electronic wonderland.

★★★★★ Andy Tipper

were once A&M's new white hope. Still founded on the core of Paul and tremulous voiced brother Kevin Weatherill with Barry Wickens providing dulcimer, violin, accordion, and mandolin, this sounds like it was pretty much recorded live in the studio and maintains their love affair with romantic drama acoustic roots rock and songs (political or personal) written from the heart. Essentially a low key, low price stop gap before the 'official' new studio album *Cooking Vinyl* debut next year, it's too good to languish in obscurity, particularly given that a) it contains a remarkable version of Lennon & McCartney's *Rain* complete with didgeridoo, and b) the assistant engineer sports the name Mike Davies.

★★★ Mike Davies

LENNY KRAVITZ *Circus (Virgin)*

If Hendrix hadn't died, then we might have well have been spared the need for Lenny to resurrect him every time he gets into a recording studio. In which case, instead of pedestrian retro rock guitar riffs he might have concentrated on the more promising country flavoured pop-soul of Magdalene and Can't Get You Off My Mind, Skynyrd style ballads such as In My Life Today. There again, he'd probably have just filled up the time with more poor man's Prince clones like Don't Go And Put A Bullet In Your Head or recycled folk-

blues Zep such as Resurrection. Can the real Lenny Kravitz please stand up. If there is one.

★★★ Mike Davies

JIMMY LAFAVE *Buffalo Return to the Plains (Lizard Discs / Bohemia Beat / Direct Distribution)*

One year on from Highway Trance, and the only member of Jimmy's Night Tribe still around is bass man, Randy Glines. Supported by a string of new musicians, including former Alejandro Escovedo sideman, Ric Poss on guitar, Jimmy continues his spiritual journey, in word and music. *Buffalo Return to the Plains* is as strong a set of songs as it's predecessor[s]. The thirteen tracks include one co-written with Oklahoma born buddy, Kevin Welch, titled Amsterdam [LaFave currently enjoys star status in Holland]. LaFave also makes a return to covering the songs of his favourite composer, with Dylan's *Sweetheart Like You*. As far as Jimmy's new songs are concerned, there's a hard rock, bluesy slide guitar on *Last Train*, slow aching ballads such as *Sweetheart Like You* and *Never Be Mine* [a LaFave speciality], the soulful *I'm Thinking of You*, the Guthrie influenced rootsy sounding title track, and the closing, politically directed lyrical missile/misive *Worn Out American Dream*. The calling card reads, Jimmy LaFave, Roots Rocker and Composer [par excel-

lence]. Watch out for the uncredited 14th cut, a reprise of *Last Train*.

★★★★ Arthur Wood

JACKIE LEVEN *Forbidden Songs of the Dying West (Cooking Vinyl)*

Whether or not you take aboard the new age spirituality Leven espouses when he talks of songs (word landscapes?) as emotional healing balm, as liberators of suppressed, neglected, 'forbidden' feelings (we're being Bardic here), it would be a cold heart not caught up in the celtic romantic grandeur (and a striking spot of Morricone) in the lyrical and musical expression of the likes of *Men in Prison* and *Young Male Suicide Blessed By Invisible Woman*. Often there's an ineffable sadness as he talks about a sense of 'fading away', (songs of dying relationships, loss, or suicide) or of being some lonely wanderer on uncertain journeys. Yet into this (as emblemised by Eddi Reader speaking *Exultation*, Emily Dickinson's poem of outer and inner journeys, by the prevalent references to land and water, and by the hymnal sound of a male voice choir) is also poured a pervasive sense of permanence and purpose, of tranquil acceptance. There's a couple of misjudged moments that upset the general melancholic mood, but otherwise it's the musical equivalent of lying amid pine trees or soaking in an aromatherapy bath.

★★★★★ Mike Davies

MAD COW DISEASE *Tantric Sex Disco (Catalina)*



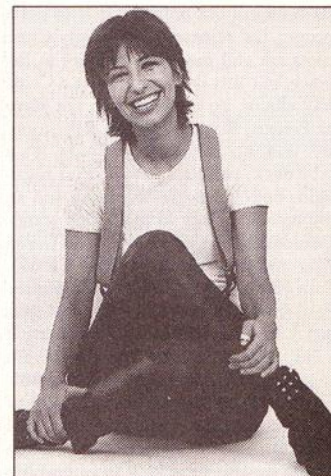
Trust me, I'm a doctor. A doctor of Good Taste. You KNOW I only prescribe the very finest remedies. So, sit yo' ass back and let me rub a bit this over ya: for some time now, I've realised the healing properties of Salisbury's MCD - their excellent Goat Lung (The Mexican Approach) was them finding their hardcore-industrial-punk feet, and this Andy (Gang Of Four) Gill-produced follow-up finds them experimenting with all manner of distasteful, mutoid thrash, funk and techno, shoving Ministry aside in the process. You know it makes sense.

★★★★★ Max

MAYA *Cross Of Silence (Playground Music / Direct Distribution)*

Given a modelling background and requisite good looks, the fact that Maya's debut album skirts the Deep Forest ambient / ethnic border could lead you to cry folly. You would, however be advised to listen before parting lips.

**recorded
delivery**



The opening, spoken word twenty seconds may reek of pretension and the following title track may be trying too hard to emulate the aforementioned Deep Forest but the piano led following *Awakening* and *Discovery* cuts make clear that Maya has both a musical intelligence and the keyboard skills to express it most eloquently. Whilst she may be no Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, these two tracks, with their effortless blend of Satie, Celtic folk and Gershwin - I kid you not - are quite mesmerising. Ultimately her music is too stately, too ambient (in its real sense) to make a hit record, though it's my guess that as more people hear it - and hear it you should - it could kick up its own quiet storm.

★★★★★ Steve Morris

SIMON MAYOR *The English Mandolin (Acoustics Records)*

OK, so the sleeve flashed composers - Holst, Grainger, Purcell - smack of classical music but don't stumble at the first hurdle, for this amazing album features their formalising of traditional English folk tunes - collected from farm and factory workers - arranged for Mayor's virtuoso mandolin, mandola and mandocello. The result fizzles with unexpected life that almost reinvests the music with the verve it must have had before said composers 'straightened' it. A Mayor maincourse may well be too much for most mainstream music fans but a selected slice between courses will surely cleanse the discerning palate.

★★★★★ Steve Morris

MAURA O'CONNELL *Stories (Hannibal)*

Before Eleanor Shanley, before Delores Keane, before Mary Black, there was O'Connell, the original singer with De Danann before she relocated to Nashville to pursue a career in the 'new acoustic music'. Re-emerging into public consciousness back here via the two *A Woman's Heart* albums, this is her

reggae

The Cool Ruler is back! Indeed now signed to a caring UK label GREGORY ISAACS has made his best album in years. *Private Lesson* (Acid Jazz) surrounds the man's oh so sensuous vocal chords with a crew of players that play reggae with that slinky sexy way that no computer will ever match. Here the songs are great, the groove is perfect and the result stands head to head with any Gregory classic you care to name. Compare *Private Lesson* to Isaacs digitally derived and Bunny Gemini produced *Memories* (Musidisc Riddim) and you'll see what I mean; *Memories* simply straightjackets the man's silky voice whilst the acid jazz set lets it float. Whilst BUJU BANTON's 'Til Shiloh (Loose Cannon) reflects the current (and welcome) lyrical move from slackness to spiritual, with 'Til I'm Laid To Rest sounding a little like a digital meeting of Ras Michael and Count Ossie, to much of the album sounds like division two Shabba. There's enough here, though, to suggest that the next set is going to be rather interesting. SPANNER BANNER's *Chill* (Island Jamaica) also checks Selassie I and Garvey on the sleeve whilst the largely Sly'n'Robbie produced set echoes the golden age with springy rhythms and soul melodies; the cover of Des'ree's *You Gotta Be* would make a great late summer hit.

THE MAD PROFESSOR has two retro

releases in the racks: ... With The Negus Roots & Players In A Rub A Dub Style (Blue Moon / Magnum) is a straight reissue of a classic 1983 session. It's dub as dub should be, inventive, dislocating and narcotic. It's also seems to be mastered from vinyl for that authentic dub experience. It's A Mad, Mad, Mad Professor (CRS / Direct Distribution) anthologises the Prof.'s Ariwa label output from the early eighties to date. Great stuff. SLY & ROBBIE'S TAXI GANG's *Hail Up The Taxi* (Island Jamaica) is a dependable variety artists set propelled by the great riddim duo. Luciano, Beenie Man, Chaka Demus & Pliers, Red Dragon and more shine brightly here. Producer Bunny Gemini turns up again, this time guiding ADMIRAL TIBET's *Excitement* (Musidisc Riddim). Too much machine for my taste but Tibet's vocals, especially on *Call Upon Jah Jah* do hit the mark. From the Trojan vaults comes *Medley Train*, a Various Artists set that collates 22, er, medleys. The acceptable face of Stars On 45 offers Bob Marley, Big Youth, John Holt, The Heptones and more. Full versions of classics on *Dynamite Reggae Classics* (Music Club) from Sugar Minott, Black Uhuru, Barrington Levy, Matumbi et al. Familiar stuff but with a dozen and a half gems for less than eight quid, pretty irresistible.

Sam Mitchell

Early hours reflections on life in all its wonderful imperfections provide the prevailing musical moods, filtered through influences that embrace blues, 60s soul (Ten Nights conjuring shades of Stay With Me Baby), folk, and, inevitably, jazz. The songs sway around in the shadows, chewing on a cigarette, nursing a half-empty wine glass, but almost always emerge into the light, eyes cast up rather than to the floor. Cool to the extent of an epic 14 minute World Of Blue, this album wants to be a Jim Jarmusch soundtrack. He should be honoured.

★★★ Mike Davies

STANFORD PRISON

EXPERIMENT

The Gato Hunch (World Domination)

There was never any doubt that SPE's second album was going to be a searing follow-up to their debut - we'd already had a taster of what was to come with the You're The Vulgarian (here opening the album) split single with Quicksand - but no-one could have foreseen the added intensity that is spat out track after angular track on this 12 song catalogue of modern-day, intelligent, Californian punk rock. It won't do, y'know, to persist in dismissing anything labelled as 'punk' when it is so finely represented by such an attitude-ridden outfit as SPE, who, with The Gato Hunch, hit, scratch, kick and nut where it matters. Mad and bad.

★★★★★ Max

TARNATION

Gentle Creatures (4AD)

For those suffering withdrawal from the prolonged absence of the Cowboy Junkies, San Francisco's Tarnation offer a more than substantial substitute, one likely to prove equally as addictive with a debut album that adopts the same sparse, echoey approach as The Trinity Sessions. The spirit of Patsy Cline has clearly blessed Paula Frazer's high lonesome voice, but so too has the lonesome prairie whine and yodel of Hank Williams, imbuing songs of love and loss with an intoxicatingly melancholic weariness as she plaintively sings things like "do you fancy me?" and "the past is only a sad tragic dream". With instrumentation that includes lap steel, cello, and banjo, the other three members contributing a lead vocal apiece, and a whole clutch of bitter-sweet tumbleweed hymns, this is the perfect soundtrack for shuffling around the honky tonk dance floor after a few lonely beers at 3am in the morning. Gosh darn wonderful.

★★★★★ Mike Davies

ERIC TAYLOR

Eric Taylor (Watermelon / Direct Distribution)

Circa '81 came Taylor's debut disc, Shameless Love. Apart from Nanci Griffith's covers, along with a few from Lyle and our own June Tabor, it's been a total famine as far as further Eric Taylor recordings have been concerned. Over the last decade and a half, if you were lucky enough to get yourself

along to Anderson Fair in Houston, or occasionally the Cactus Cafe in Austin, you could catch Taylor doin' some pickin' n' singin'. Other than that ... nothing ... maybe the eighties were not his time. As the nineties advanced, Taylor certainly appeared to be reassessing his relationship with the recording business.

And now we finally have it - the long overdue and absolutely essential, second Eric Taylor solo album and from the opening Dean Moriarty to the closing Shoeshine Boy, this album is quite simply a sheer delight. It's also a stone classic. Eric's words - his true life tales, wistful movies and fetching vignettes - are allowed to shine through, adorned only by the minimum of instrumentation, which is as it should be as, in my book, Taylor's novelistic style of songwriting allows him to stand shoulder to shoulder with those Texas born literary giants, McMurtry and McCormac. Between now and the coming of '96, if you only purchase one CD, this is the one you need.

★★★★★ Arthur Wood

TUSCADERO

Step Into My Wiggle Room (Teenbeat)

When not playing at art school experimentalists with titles like Sonic Yoghurt and freak out instrumental breaks, what you've got here is fuzzed up, lo fi US girlie indie pop, at best a Voice of the Beehive it's okay to like, at worst jangly noise with a tendency to flaunt its sexuality.

★★★ Mike Davies

VARIOUS

The Postcrypt (1 - 800 - PRIME - CD / Import) Captured Live - On The Mountain 2 (103.7 FM Seattle / Import)

There has been an avalanche of damned fine American, acoustic poet [well, some of them at least] compilations of late. Artist wise, some feature regional performers, some [inter]national. A number are available by mail order only. Hesitate at the latter barrier and you're lost. Invest, and your life will be truly enriched. Among those captured in performance [circa 1993] at New York City's The Postcrypt Coffee-house were Buddy Mondlock, Cliff Eberhardt, Erica Wheeler, Dar Williams, Richard Shindell and Michael McNevin. Radio station KMTT 103.7 FM - The Mountain, broadcasts from the Pacific North West. Their second live compilation features, Indigo Girls, Blue Rodeo, Sarah McLachlan, Toad the Wet Sprocket, John Gorka, Shawn Colvin, Hootie And The Blowfish, Jesse Colin Young, Loreena McKennitt, Widespread Panic, and The Spin Doctors. Some line-up huh? And, folks, a similarly tasty Volume 1 is still available. Tagged to the end of Volume 2, the proceeds of which go to the Wilderness Society charity, are a number of station ID jingles, including one from the Hothouse Flowers.

O.K.? Dollars ready? The relevant state-side mail order addresses are; 1 - 800 - PRIME - CD, 111 E. 14th Street, Suite 300, New York, NY 1003; Dean Carlson, 103.7 FM - The Mountain, 1100 Olive

Way, Suite 1650, Seattle, WA 98101-1827. Let's give 'em a ★★★★★ average, eh? Arthur Wood

VARIOUS

Spirit of 73: Rock For Choice (Epic)

Founded by L7 and the Feminist majority in 1991, Rock For Choice is a music biz fund raiser to protect abortion rights and educate youth about 'reproductive freedom'. This benefit album looks back to 1973, the year when the Supreme Court passed legislation legalising abortion. In practice this means a bunch of sisters covering 70s songs by other women. Inevitably it's a mixed result, ranging between Eve Plum's excruciating If I Can't Have You (Yvonne Elliman) and Letters To Cleo's lumbering Dreams (Stevie Nicks) to the excellence of the Indigo Girls and Roseanne Cash with the more obscure It Won't Take Long and River. Inbetween you get Cassandra Wilson (Killing Me Softly), Ebony Vibe Everlasting, (We Are Family) and Sarah McLachlan (Blue) doing acceptable imitations, the unlikely prospect of Babes In Toyland with More...More...More and scuzzy guitar versions of Midnight At The Oasis and Have You Ever Been Mellow from That Dog and Pet. As for L7 they cheat on the deal by bringing in Joan Jett for a live reprise of the Runaways Cherry Bomb.

★★★ Mike Davies

VARIOUS

Tower of Song (A&M)

A more mainstream tribute to Leonard Cohen than 1991's indie hip I'm Your Fan,

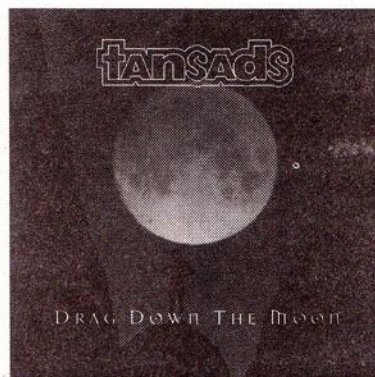
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the notion of Don Henley singing Everybody Knows or Elton John pumping his way through I'm Your Man are as awful in reality as they sound on paper. No less so are Peter Gabriel's melodramatically poker face and cosmic reading of Suzanne, and Billy Joel's overstated big stadium Vegas rock ballad take on Light As The Breeze. Yet there's still joys to be found, from Bono's innovative stark, brittle and didgeridoo (?) coloured Hallelujah to Aaron Neville's unexpected but wholly successful country styling of Ain't No Cure For Love. As you'd expect, Tori Amos, Willie Nelson, Jann Arden and Suzanne Vega respectively cover Famous Blue Raincoat, Bird On A Wire, If It Be Your Will and Story of Isaac in their own distinctive individual styles, while Coming Back To You gets compare and contrast interpretations from Trisha Yearwood and Martin Gore (the latter winning on points). However, the most notable has to be the just back from the pub version of Sisters Of Mercy from Sting and the Chieftains, though whether that's down to Paddy Maloney recasting it as a jig or Sting's sudden attack of Irish brogue is open to question.

★★★ Mike Davies

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