

Brooks Williams NEW EVERYTHING

Red Guitar Blue Music

★★★★☆

This is surely Brooks' most accomplished solo collection yet



The three-way, fold-out card liner carries the simple dedication: 'In memory of Michael Terry.' For two decades, Terry was the manager of/booker for Uncle Calvin's Coffeehouse in Dallas, Texas, a venue that under his guidance gained a national reputation among folk music's touring singer-songwriters. Williams' *BABY O!* (2010) was produced by Andy Bell, and the same goes for *NEW EVERYTHING* with eight of the 13 songs recorded in the producer's Sheffield studio, the remainder at Kyoti Studio in Glasgow.

Constructed around the repeated: 'One step, two steps, three steps to her door' the energetic and optimistic *One Step* opens the disc. *Mercury Blues* was penned by the late K.C. Douglas and supporting Brooks' contributions on acoustic, electric and resonator guitar, Steve Lockwood performs what can best be described as harmonica gymnastics. Originally titled *Mercury Boogie*, it has been covered by Steve Miller, David Lindley, Dwight Yoakam, while Alan Jackson took it to number two on the American country chart in 1993. It's followed by a mighty fine rendition of Dave Alvin's *King Of California* from the Californian's 1994 acoustic album of the same name. An acoustic rendition of *Carry On*, a road song, is the first of two (versions) on *NEW EVERYTHING*—'We go to a distant town with our two guitars, Well we tear it down, and for a time the world stands still.' *Prosperity* paints a portrait of hard times, the reference 'a chicken in every pot' paraphrasing candidate Herbert Hoover's 1928 presidential election promise. *Deep River Blues* originally titled *Big River Blues* was penned, circa 1933, by Alabama-bred Alton & Rabon Delmore aka The Delmore Brothers, and here Brooks' lead vocal and resonator guitar is supported by Martin Simpson's resonator slide.

Supported by Gustaf Lundgren (electric guitar, harmony vocals) and Boo Hewerdine (acoustic guitar, harmony vocals), Williams ploughs a distinctly pop furrow on *New Everything*, 1960s Liverpool/Manchester bands being the inspiration. A deal of mayhem occurs in *Son Of A Gun*, and while

there's mention of knockabout at the outset of the gently paced *Playground Games*, the narrator dreams that: '...one day soon I'll turn it all around, I'll say that it's my turn now to knock you to the ground.' *Time 4 Love* and the ensuing *Teach Me* were recorded in Glasgow, the former is slow and bluesy while the latter is Latin tinged, and both prominently feature Kevin McGuire's double bass. As is the case on *Prosperity*, Brooks is the sole contributor to optimistic *Moon Over Maverick* and the album closes with a band rendition of *Carry On*. Considering the remarkable number of musical changes embraced here, this is surely Brooks' most accomplished solo collection yet. **Arthur Wood**

www.brookswilliams.com/

Alan Jackson THE BLUEGRASS ALBUM

ACR/EMI

Records Nashville

★★★★

Jackson goes bluegrass with the same integrity of his country recordings



From the outset of his recording career, almost 25 years ago, Alan Jackson mastered a blend of catchy choruses and traditional instrumentation, filling his self-penned songs with images extracted from real-life scenes anyone who has spent time in rural America will recognise. His subtly different style gave him originality, while his ability to draw on places and emotions that matter gave his songs heart. He has gone bluegrass with this record and used the same approach in his writing (eight of the 14 songs are self-penned) as he has employed with his country recordings, and in the main it works. For the most part bluegrass and the kind of traditional country music that Jackson specialises in are not all that different, so that even songs from his back catalogue like *Let's Get Back To Me And You*, originally included on 1994's *WHO I AM*, slots into the bluegrass arrangement as if specially written for the genre.

The main strength of the album is the production by Keith Stegall and Jackson's nephew, Adam Wright. They have brought on board some of bluegrass music's finest modern players including Scott Coney (acoustic guitar), Sammy Shelor (banjo), Adam Steffey (mandolin), Tim Crouch (fiddle), Tim Dishman (bass),

Rob Ickes (Dobro) and Ronnie Bowman and Don Rigsby (vocals). They all come together superbly with the revival of the Dillards' *There Is A Time* and Jackson's own *Blacktop*. The vibrant and bluegrass sound of the instruments combined with Jackson's stellar vocals create a winning combination. Adam Wright's *Knew All The Time* (previously recorded by the Wrights—Adam and wife Shannon) fits Jackson like a glove and is one of the album's genuine highlights. No so successful is the revival of John Anderson's *Wild And Blue*. You've got to be a mighty powerful and distinctive vocalist to consider matching Anderson's definitive original, and though pretty good, Jackson falls a full country mile short. A little lightweight it might be, but for Alan Jackson, like the rest of this album, it works. And for his many fans, that is what really counts. **Alan Cackett**

www.alan.jackson.com

Cherry Lee Mewis & Max Milligan CHERRY PICKIN' EP

Cherry Jam Music

★★★★

New blues that is rooted in the past



Cherry Lee Mewis has been working with Max Milligan for eight years now, with Max writing many songs for and with Cherry, as well as producing her albums and playing guitar in her band. This six-track CD features all songs written by Max (with just one co-write), he also shows his skill with the guitar on the instrumental *Vestapol*.

Meet Me At The Station is a punchy tune that will have you tapping your toes and clicking your fingers. *Sounds Like Heaven To Me* is another catchy track that takes you back to the old jug bands and Cherry's vivacious vocals are a delight. *Wake Up Sun* at 36 seconds is far too short as it sounds so good. *Good Lovin'* is an ideal song for the summer and should be played whenever the sun is out. But the pick of the cherries in this bowl of songs has to be the spine-tingling love ballad *It's Over* on which Miss Mewis delivers straight to the heart, this proves how good this young lady's voice really is. Sadly this CD is under 15 minutes long, but it is a great way to check this lady out if you have not heard her before. **David Knowles**

www.cherryleemewis.com