

NEW RELEASES

even Asleep At The Wheel. This is country music how it used to be ... rough edges, real heart and soul and song lyrics that are universal with their simplicity that cuts right through all the crap to get to the very heart of human relationships. **Alan Cackett**

The Great Recession Orchestra DOUBLE SHOT

NewTex Records:
NT5870

★★★★

Reclaimed old-time American folk songs done with verve and style

A core of half a dozen accomplished Texas musicians augmented by ten others on various tracks make up the Great Recession Orchestra—an outfit dedicated to keeping the old music of America alive, and it's fair to say that it's hard to imagine it in safer hands. All the players have that easy style and grace that only comes from years of getting out there and doing it, and although they're clearly an informal gathering they have that simpatico that means they slide together as smoothly as you could wish.

The album is divided in two. Part one is labelled The Forties In Fort Worth and covers songs from then and there—early Texas swing basically—like *Gee Baby* and *Slow Boat*, while part two, Shaking The Sheiks, reclaims the songs of legendary outfit The Mississippi Sheiks—a family of former slaves who played around 1890 or so and are best known for *Sitting On Top Of The World*, which is not included here as the GRO have commendably avoided the obvious and overdone. The band swing like demons; they clearly love the material and the era and the songs are great. This is music you just have to dance to, or at least tap your toes to. Above all, it's fun.

A big outfit like this is almost impossible to make financially viable so, as the band's website puts it, they have 'largely given up on the business realities of the new so-called musical paradigm... [so] we are just 'giving' the CDs away [for \$5].' It might be a bit more if you're in the UK but this is the sort of music and musicians who really need supporting, so get out there and get one. **Jeremy Searle**

www.newtexrecords.net

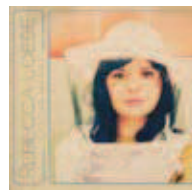


Rebecca Loebe CIRCUS HEART

Black Wolf Records

★★★★☆

Quite simply this is a wall-to-wall folk/pop delight



The ten-song CIRCUS HEART is 2009 Kerrville New Folk Song Contest winner Rebecca Loebe's third full album—born in Virginia, has lived in Georgia, Massachusetts and now resides in Texas. The album was recorded at Mark Addison's Aerie Studio in Austin, and he engineered the sessions, whilst Matt Sever aka. Matt The Electrician occupied the producer's chair. Amongst a vast array of instruments, Addison played Wurlitzer, electric guitar, bass, bouzouki and added harmony vocals, whilst The Electrician added keyboards, acoustic, electric and tenor guitar, ukulele, trumpet and more, as well as singing harmony. The other session players were Donny Wynn (drums, percussion), Andrew Pressman (upright and electric bass), Raina Rose (lead guitar, harmony vocals) plus harmonies from Lex Land and Shae Stuart. The latter pair are out-of-towners, now an integral part of the vibrant Austin music scene.

I clearly recall first hearing the album opener during a 2010 Kerrville Folk Festival In-The-Round that featured a quartet of New Folk winners and finalists, including Rebecca. During that performance, Raina Rose proved beyond doubt that girls can play lead guitar. There's an obvious and wicked twinkle in the eye of the sassy *Darlin* narrator—sic: 'The smell of your beard in the morning'—as she recalls, instantly being transformed from introvert to extrovert—'Next thing I knew it was skippin', out on the pond, skinny dippin'—whilst the lyric is neatly wrapped up by the repeated 'What did you do to my (pause) heart.' Of course, what made me truly smile was the ensuing aside: 'When can you do it again.' Sever has gone for a, 'everything including the kitchen sink' approach on *Darlin* and it succeeds in spades.

On this set, Rebecca has hook-laden melody nailed down, and replete with a Mariachi interlude that's clearly evidenced by the ballsy title song. The allegorical *Swallowed By The Sea* concerning her life in the music business was penned during her participation in the first Stateside season of The Voice. Loebe possesses

'one hell of a set of pipes' and on *High & Lonesome*, her voice ascends to the stratosphere and then gently settles back to terra firma. The latter is a treatise with a twist—namely, love and the less-than-luxurious hotel rooms that are a road warrior's lot.

At almost six minutes duration, the sublime *Georgia*—replete with mention of the state's prevalent 'magnolia and pine'—is this album's longest song, wherein the deceased narrator contemplates reincarnation with: 'Heaven send me back to Georgia.' Death is also very much present in *The Chicago Kid*. The album's only cover song is Joan Jett's *Bad Reputation*; *Mercy* possesses a confessional feel, while the penultimate, keyboard propelled *I Will Wait* is a love ode. Featuring Raina's lead guitar and harmony vocal, *Vagabond Prayer* brings the album to a gentle close with the road warrior deliberating on the subject of *home*. An infectious air of unshackled abandon pervades this folk/pop collection. CIRCUS HEART is a wonderfully wayward tonic and more fun than a bag of monkeys, and that's a fact. **Arthur Wood**

www.rebeccaloeb.com

Susan Cattaneo LITTLE BIG SKY

Jersey Girl Music

★★★★☆

Stunning seven-track studio release from New Jersey's singer-songwriting storyteller



Memorable and vibrant lyrics, refreshing vocals and energised instrumentation seems to be what New Jersey's award-winning Susan Cattaneo—a songwriting professor at the world-renowned Berklee College of Music in Boston—is all about, and it's certainly the case of her third studio release LITTLE BIG SKY—an emotive collection of songs, superbly written and tastefully laced with organic soul and country-rock fused flair.

Having enjoyed previous success with her earlier releases—BRAVE AND WILD (2009) which won the award of Boston Artist Debut of the Year, plus being listed as one of the Top 10 Records of the Year, and HEAVEN TO HEARTACHE (2011) which won national and international acclaim—this third album is sure to bathe in the same highs, if not more.