

an infectious spirit and twangy guitars front and centre. Don't Wanna Hear It has a grungy edge as she spits out that she's sick and tired of a former lover's excuses. She's back in the barrooms for Demons Don't Get Me Down as she turns to the whiskey and cigarettes and she explores the tough subjects of grief and loss with both strength and fragility. This Canadian gal's voice rings with hard-won experience and dark foreshadowing. A pure heartworn delight. **Alan Cackett**

www.lindiortega.com

Langhorne Slim & The Law THE WAY WE MOVE

Ramseur Records

★★★★

Magneticalalternative
country



The much trailed title song which opens up the album (This Is) The Way We Move is currently being featured in the new Microsoft Windows 8 commercial and has also been used in the advance for the new Tina Fey and Paul Rudd movie Admission. As if it needed more exposure the song is also being used over the closing credits on an American TV comedy series 21 and Over. Slim should make enough royalties from all of those plays not to worry too much about album sales but he will probably get those as well. However, it is not difficult to understand why the song is so popular; it is well sung and played, very catchy and bounces along, just says to all who are listening that if you want to be up with events this is what you do. There is a good youtube offering of the Windows 8 advertisement and by the way I am not promoting the software but I am, for no personal reward, plugging the song.

Other tracks I liked are Salvation, complete with marvellous banjo intro from band member David Moore, the entertaining Two Crooked Hearts and the inspirational Bad Luck. Moore is mainly a keyboard specialist and that is also to the fore on several tracks. For the avoidance of doubt there is no spiritual theme here. Salvation is connected to a personal relationship and Bad Luck, with its Buddy Holly style drumbeat intro is a petition to battle on through the hard times. Slim lists Waylon Jennings and Porter Wagoner as influences but there is much more of a rockabilly feel to some of the numbers

here. Behind the drums is enduring Slim collaborator Malachi Delorenzo and the remaining member of The Law is David Moore's long time pal bass guitarist and vocalist Jeff Ratner.

There is an appealing, spirited rawness to this band, well reflected in most of the 14 tracks of this album and although there are similarities to others here and there, this band can only be categorised as originals as evidenced by the great reviews for their live performances which have included the Newport and Philadelphia Folk Festivals and opening many shows for the Avett Brothers and the Drive By Truckers. There is an edge to this album due in no small part to cutting the whole thing, old style, live to tape and it is just great listening. By the way I was wondering what on earth the dominant pictures of old time freestyle boxers were doing on the album sleeve but its 'the way we move' ... of course. Paul Collins

www.langhorneslim.com

Junior Brown VOLUME 10

Self-Release

★★★

Retro-billy with a
small, modern twist
of excitement



This is the first EP's-worth of new music from the award-winning (CMA, Grammy, IBMA) Arizona-born, Texas-based old-time crooner and guitarist, Junior Brown in seven years, and it's sure to leave you smiling. Recognised for his unique style and witty deliverance, Junior taps into a variety of musical flavours on this six-track release, from bluesy honky-tonk (Trust Me), acoustic jazz (Apathy Waltz) and an old-timey, jazz-tinged instrumental number (Almost To Tulsa); all demonstrating his musical depth and somewhat lyrical distinction.

Hang Up And Drive provides a comical tongue-in-cheek opening to the EP, as Junior seems to be telling the young of today off for the use of mobile phones whilst driving—a theme we can all relate to—whilst The Phantom Of The Opry is a light-hearted take on the Andrew Lloyd Webber classic. The toe-tapping I'm Headed Back To Austin Tonight is perhaps the more country-fused of the six; its old-timey sound, laced with Junior's signature double-neck, 'guit-steel' guitar (as all of the songs are) chords, making for a memorable

listen.

It's a much welcomed return from a Junior Brown, and if you fancy something a little different and a little quirky, give VOLUME 10 a deserving spin. Emily Saxton

www.juniorbrown.com

Lori McKenna MASSA- CHUSETTS

Self-released

★★★★

McKenna has poured
heart and soul into
the beauty and sadness
that is MASSACHUSETTS



Lori was born and bred in Stoughton, Massachusetts and still resides there. The self-released MASSACHUSETTS is her seventh solo outing (including 2003's 'homemade' THE KITCHEN TAPES). Long-time McKenna sideman and accomplished solo singer-songwriter in his own right, Mark Erelli, produced MASSACHUSETTS which was recorded live in Chris Rival's Middleville barn studio in North Reading, Massachusetts. Mark whittled down 70 McKenna originals to the dozen songs featured, the result—a potent 50/50 brew of tuneful and engaging compositions, co-written and self-penned.

The core support players were McKenna in concert regulars, Jamie Edwards (piano, Hammond B3 organ, keyboards, electric guitar) and Mark Erelli (acoustic and electric guitars, mandolin, lap steel, percussion, vocals), plus Paul Kochanski (electric/upright bass) and long-time Aimee Mann sideman John Sands (drums, percussion). A number of guest musicians contribute, more of which later.

The self-penned Salt launches the album, wherein the runaway narrator relates: '6 Years of crying—That's all you gave me, Not one more thing—not even a baby' and further abrading the still raw wound she chides: 'You ain't worth the spit in my mouth, When I scream out your name.' My Love Follows You Where You Go was co-written with regular collaborators Barry Dean and Liz Rose, while Smaller And Smaller, co-written with Tony Lane, subjectively ploughs different ground. A commentary on social change witnessed first hand—'Some things last forever—some things don't—it concludes that capitalism's malls are devouring small town America.

Created with Troy Verges, early one

NEW RELEASES

morning last summer at a California winery, the main character in *Susanna* is a widower. As the verses unfold, allusions to death include: 'There ain't nothing down here for the left behind'—there's the insight that he's a musician—'Susanna who's he gonna sing to'—and that the departed was an artist—'Why don't you paint him a brand new sky.' Fiction or based on fact, I'll let you, the reader, decide. Subliminal or intentional the song is, nevertheless, a doozy. Further gems, heard three years ago during a McKenna house concert in Vermont, include *Make Every Word Hurt* and *How Romantic Is That*. Both self-penned, the former is honest but lyrically caustic, while the latter, the tale of a young blue collar couple, offers: 'Every time you walk away from me you come running back, How romantic is that.'

Both regular McKenna collaborators, Barry Dean assisted with *Shouting* and Fred Wilhelm with *Take Me With You When You Go*, while Mike Viola co-wrote *Love Can Put It Back Together*. Viola, a Stoughton native, began his musical career during the 1980s and they duet on this ode to their hometown, and particularly for the ageing, currently vacant Stoughton Theatre. Featuring Lori's vocal and a finger-picked acoustic guitar, *MASSACHUSETTS* winds gently to a close with the optimistic *Grown Up Now*, penned for a much loved child. Arthur Wood

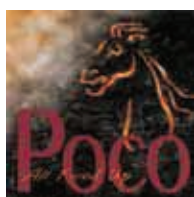
<http://lorimckenna.com/>

Poco ALL FIRED UP

Blue Rose Records

★★★★

Country-rock pioneers return to the fray all fired up



Poco is, and always will be, the epitome of country-rock. The legendary band put the rock, as well as some country, in country-rock. Even after all these years, Poco still gives me shivers. They give so much positive feeling—music, friendship, welcoming and heartfelt spirit—you always left a Poco show on an amazing emotional high. After a lengthy absence from the studio they return—*ALL FIRED UP*. Though there's only Rusty Young from the original line-up, newcomers Jack Sundrud, Michael Webb and George Lawrence, have each been an integral part of Poco for a number of years. Original member George Grantham makes a

special guest appearance on the title song and the noted horn player Bobby Keys adds saxophone to *That's What Rock And Roll Will Do*. Otherwise it's all their own work with Young being justifiably at the forefront in terms of songwriting, vocals and in his role as multi-instrumentalist (acoustic & electric guitars, pedal steel, lap steel, Dobro, banjo, mandolin), but the lead vocals are shared out to produced a varied sound throughout with their basic country-rock ease augmented by some arrangements and vocal excursions into blues and Americana territory.

Central to the album is Rusty Young's *Regret*, with its tasty country flavour and Rusty's distinctively reflective vocal enhanced by those beautiful Poco harmonies, stunning electric guitar work and a thoughtful arrangement that speaks volumes in such a neat and tasteful manner. A song that surely must take all Poconuts way up into music heaven. Jack Sundrud steps up to the mic for his own *When She's Mine*, with Young's steel guitar weaving in and out of the background and again those exquisite harmonies very much in evidence. Jack brings a much different sound to the table with *Hard Country*, a well-written song that approaches head-on the struggle of trying to make a living as a farmer in these tough economic times. Rusty's *Rockin' Horse Blues* proves their all around ability for different styles as they take a blues-rock stance that grows in stature with each listen. With 45 years, 25 albums and thousands of fans behind them, Poco was, is and forever will be the defining voice of country-rock. *ALL FIRED UP* shows that they've still got what it takes.

Alan Cackett

www.poconut.com

Roger Knox and The Pine Valley Cosmonauts STRANGER IN MY LAND

Bloodshot Records:

BS179

★★★★

Country songs from down under with a sting in its tail

Roger Knox is an Aboriginal Australian singer, known down under as the Koori King of Country or Black Elvis. A chance meeting with Jon Langford of the Wacos, the Mekons and head honcho of the



Pine Valley Cosmonauts, as Langford was singing one of Knox's old hits, led to this album—a collection of songs written by indigenous Australians influenced by the country records brought over by G.I.s during the World War II. Country music, it appears, struck a chord with the Aboriginals who were in no better state than American Negroes before the war. Discrimination, jail, forced migrations were their lot and they responded by singing about their woes in this American vernacular.

Knox and Langford hunted down a selection of these songs, some only available on field recordings and laid down the basic tracks in Australia. Heading home, Langford then assembled a stellar cast to add their talents with the result that the album boasts a mighty impressive cast list. Dave Alvin, Bonnie Prince Billy, Kelly Hogan, Andre Williams, Sally Timms and The Sadies all pitched in, with the feather in the cap being one of the last vocals recorded by Charlie Louvin before his sad demise. The end result is a superb collection of songs that range from swamp rock to old fashioned Opry country laments. Langford weaves the supporting cast in such a way that Knox remains the star, with the result that the album stands as a strong indictment of the way his native people have been treated. With songs that were written by prisoners, songs that note the damage wreaked by alcohol and the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families, one would expect this to be an angry diatribe against the policies of various Australian governments. Instead the album comes across as a joyous celebration of the power of song in the face of injustice, with several uplifting moments. Reminiscent at times of Freddy Fender and even Roger Miller there is much to savour here, with some fine vocal duets and grand steel guitar licks. In addition, Langford has produced a little gem in the packaging with excellent and informative sleeve notes adorned with his artwork. Kudos must go out to Langford, Bloodshot Records and all of the participants for their roles in this project, which captures a little known corner of country music and reminds the listener of the on-going struggle of the indigenous natives of Australia. Paul Kerr

www.bloodshotrecords.com/album/roger-knox-stranger-my-land