

Lee's irrepressible sense of fun and firm refusal to fall into self-obsessed singer-songwriter mode. **JH**  
www.philleel.com

**Pierce Pettis**  
**THAT KIND OF LOVE**

Compass Records

★★★★

On his ninth solo outing, Pettis has come up with another charismatic song collection

Spiritually infused, the first song *I Am Nothing*, is thrust upon the listener with harsh, abrupt opening lines, making an unusual start to an album. *Veracruz* is a sweet memory of passionate nights in Mexico, dating from the time when Pierce was contracted as a songwriter. The pensive *Farewell*, which follows, is another memory which Pettis recalls about an ancestor. Considering the appearance of certain key words in *Lion's Eye*, one could conclude that the inspiration was a certain C. S. Lewis children's classic.

Jonell Mosser co-wrote the faith-filled avowal *You Did That For Me*. Also possessed of a faith-infused lyric, the album title track focuses on love that's unconditional and unsurpassable. Two Hammond B3s inject a swampy soulful feel into Jesse Winchester's *Talk Memphis*. The second of three cover songs in this collection. A backing vocalist on *Veracruz*, Katie Herzig adds her unique voice to the tender *Hallelujah Song*. Propelled at the outset by Stuart Duncan's fiddle, the penultimate cut is Woody Guthrie's *Pastures Of Plenty*, the tale of Okies who, during the 1930s, were forced to journey to California in search of employment. Bearing a dedication to his wife, Pierce closes this collection with *Something For The Pain*, an exploration of the opening verse assertion: 'Life is a mystery.' **AWood**  
www.compassrecords.com

**Rachael Sage**  
**CHANDELIER**

Impress MP4545-2

★★★

Piano driven mature insights into love and loss

The spirit of Tori Amos hangs heavy over the latest album from New York singer-songwriter Rachael Sage. Not merely because of the obvious one woman and her piano comparison, but because for an awful lot of this album Sage not only plays like Amos, all glittering keyboard runs and pounded bass keys, but sings like her too with gaspy breathy vocals and staccato intensity. As the album progresses though, she gradually casts Amos off and starts to sing in her own, powerful, emotional and yes, huskily sexy voice, best showcased on her cover of Jay Clifford's subtle but ballsy breakup song *Mexico*.

Sage comes into her own as a writer as well. The closing song *Hunger In John* is heartbreaking, a sharp as a blade exposition of how relationships fail when people change and the title track's ruminations on sudden unexpected loss, 'what if I woke up tomorrow and couldn't play/the truth is I don't really know if I'd be brave' is the soundtrack to an awful lot of people's late nights. Likewise the eponymous narrator in *Corinne* and the ache of *Moonlight And Fireflies* will strike chords of truth in listeners hearts.

Filling to some extent at least the gap left by the ongoing absence of



**Various Artists**  
**MAVERICK FESTIVAL 08: LIVE FROM THE BARN**  
MAVFEST CD1

★★★★★

Oh what a time we had at the inaugural Maverick Festival in August 2008 and this CD represents the crème de la crème of the fine array of artists that appeared

Recorded live at the Maverick Festival in 2008 this CD serves as both a superb memento of that great weekend last August and a timely reminder that the second Maverick Festival will be held once again at Easton Farm Park in Suffolk on the weekend of July 3-5 nearly two months earlier than last year, the good weather has been ordered, so let's look forward to another great time. The album opens with one of my personal highlights of the weekend, Mark Olsen and the superb *Salvation Blues*. Mark has one of those voices that is so easy on the ear, I well remember the audience in the barn listening intently to his voice and lyrics, you could have heard a pin drop. Next up we have *Blues In The Bottle* performed by the Hot Seats—yes that's right, Special Ed and the Short Bus have a new name—great musicians and performers and their knack of merchandising was a treat to hear and watch, they must run a market stall in their spare time! Eilen Jewell delivers her rockabilly infused country blues on *If You Catch Me Stealin'* and then it's the turn of wordsmith William Topley who made a rare UK appearance here performing the song *You Don't Love Me Anymore*. Young pretenders and festival favourites and indeed booked to appear at this year's festival Two Fingers Of Firewater deliver us *Satan, Your Kingdom Must Come Down/Bandit*. I well remember being covered by a pint thrown in the air by one Barry Everitt as we danced maniacally to their set, a great band and a name to watch. If it's heavenly voices that tickle your musical taste buds then the Haley Sisters did not disappoint, this pair should receive the acclaim they richly deserve and their emotive delivery of *The Sweetest Gift* displays their true talent, don't miss them this year, highly recommended. Southern Tenant Folk Union are one of the UK's finest purveyors of old time bluegrass, perfect harmonies and superb instrumentation, the track *No More Hard Times (No More Trouble)* display these qualities to perfection. Aply backed by pedal steel maestro B J Cole, Devon Sproule delivers the song *Julie* a unique mix of tumbleweed and Tarantino country and Saturday night headliner Sam Baker gives us a superb rendition of the song *Iron*. The final track is from one of the most frequent visitors to the UK from the good old US of A. Elizabeth Cook never fails to disappoint as usual backed by husband and guitarist Tim Carroll rounding off this CD with *Here's To You*, her down-home country music always a pleasure to listen to. All I can say is roll on July 3. **JHS**  
www.maverickfestival.co.uk



Mary Chapin Carpenter, Sage makes mature music for the post-thirties and soundtracks their lives (particularly female ones) in much the way that Carpenter once did. Her dilemmas are their dilemmas, her hopes and dreams are the same as theirs, and the warm glow of recognition allied to Sage's talent and skill means that many will take her music to their hearts after a single listening. **JS**  
www.rachelsage.com

**Steve Richard**  
**STEVE RICHARD**  
Force MP Entertainment

★★★★

Top quality debut album by an artist

whose voice and talent seems destined for Nashville greatness

Having toured last year with the likes of Lynyrd Skynyrd, it is clear to see that the great music of Ronnie Van Zant has rubbed off onto Richard's and has led to him releasing this quite excellent album of twelve songs, with seven of them co-written by himself. Country-rock is what best describes the mood of this album, albeit with some sublime songs sung in Richard's gravely-voice that make you want to hang on and not switch over to the next track. *We Ain't Saints* has as good a country-rock sound to it as you'll ever find. Richard's vocals sound as though they've been put through a blender a good few times and then rubbed against a cheese grater. They sound so raw that it makes you immediately imagine Johnny Cash in his Folsom Prison gig.

*Bridge Back Home* is one of the most pop sounding songs, with its overuse of drums quite distracting at times, but it is Richard's voice which makes you want to hear the rest regardless of whether or not the song doesn't sound quite like your typical country song. It sure is helped out by some slight harmonic playing, and it can be said confidently that whoever played the harp on this track did not let themselves down. *Last Lines* has an extremely superb sound to it, with its harmonies sure to impress many. The pedal steel in some country songs can be quite overbearing at times, but in *Last Lines* this never occurs. The drumming merely adds to the song's quality and results in this being

the album's best song.

Every album made for the country-rock audience must surely include a song apt for driving to, and Richard certainly does not disappoint with *Lost Time*. With its memorable groove, fantastic pedal steel playing and superb vocals this is a song you could be forgiven for driving that bit quicker than usual when hearing it. As debut albums goes, this certainly is a cracker. Richard has the voice, looks and talent which are necessary to survive in mainstream Nashville today. Let's hope this album is not the last work released by this promising artist. **RH**  
http://steverichardmusic.com/

**Rebecca Worthley**  
**MORNING COMES TO THOSE WHO WAIT**  
PEP09702

★★

A heavy collection of serious, depressed lyrics

The poet Robert Frost once said that free verse was like playing tennis without a net. Unfortunately Rebecca Worthley seems to think she no longer requires a bat, a ball or the faintest idea where her opponent is. 'Little did she know that the lily-whites of her eyes would sometimes betray her to the ghosts in the hallways of delusion; Little did she know that the very little that she knew needs to be told over and over to the gossips of inner disillusion; To the make-up artists of skewed perception. It's another 200 miles like a ghost on the horizon's tail.' Maybe these lyrics mean something to Miss Worthley but they are so artless as to have rendered the whole disc unlistenable. Nobody expects songs to be coherent (see Bob Dylan) but you would hope to remember a phrase from an entire album.

These songs seem to be designed to tell you that here is a serious songwriter with something serious to say. Unfortunately that something is that she can't write for toffee. Perhaps all this sounds harsh. Worthley does have a lovely voice, a really lovely voice. So maybe replacing some of her artless words with 'blah' might have a better effect. Or perhaps just not printing the lyrics with such pride. **HD**  
www.rebeccaworthley.co.uk



**Rebecca Hollweg**  
**ORANGE ROSES**

Emu Records EMU 04

★★★★

Meticulous craftsmanship and exquisite songs from this West Country songwriter

ORANGE ROSES is the second album by London-based singer-songwriter Rebecca Hollweg, following on from her 2001 debut album *JUNE BABIES*. No doubt this hiatus was due to raising a family with the arrival of young daughter Ruby, now aged four who participates on this recording by singing into the microphone on the hidden track—Sweet touch on mummy!

Rebecca's music came to my attention when country radio started playing the single and title track. Then most recently she did a session on Janis Long's Radio 2 show. Encouraged by this I went to see Rebecca play a superb set at the National Theatre Foyer and came home happy armed with this CD! It's a collection of 9 insightful and classy songs, which get beautifully.

The album is produced by her husband, musician and bass player Andy Hamill and features contributions from excellent session players, Mike Outram (guitar), Phil Peskett (piano), Tom Gordon (drums) and also Julian Ferraretto (violin, viola and string arrangements). Singer-songwriter and artist Jeb Loy Nichols designed the CD cover.

Rebecca writes deceptively about the everyday things of life. The opener *Love Me Back* is magical, rhythmic jazz-pop. With its gentle pace and soft percussion it sets the tempo for a listening experience of mellow, melodic songs with tinges of country, folk, jazz and pop. *Orange Roses* with the sensitive pleasant piano intro is heart tugging. This beautiful track is personally my contender for song of the year. It's about wiping away the sadness and embracing new beginnings. 'Sometimes it seems that it's all endings/Strings of sad farewells and long goodbyes/But time has come to celebrate beginnings/Time to wipe the sadness from our eyes,' she sings on this polished performance. *These Are My Tears* with its smooth electric guitar is something you could imagine

