

fROOTS

CARA DILLON

THE SONGBIRD TAKES WING

Local Music From Out There

Susheela Raman

Bhundu Boys

Lucy Duran

Habib Koite

Songcatcher

Andrea Marquee

Mamadou Diabate

Chris Thomas King

Holmes Brothers

Frank Harte

Madredeus

Womad

more!

WIN! Okinawa Books & CDs



NANCI GRIFFITH

Clock Without Hands Elektra 7559-62660-2

There's little doubt that Griffith's recent involvement with the Campaign For A Landmine Free World, has rejuvenated the fire in her belly for writing songs that touch the heart and soul. Aided by some well chosen covers, *Clock Without Hands* is a tapestry of significant snapshots from Nanci's America, chock full of the wisdom that only age can bring. The passage of time allows us to assess the victories, constructively rebuild upon the losses and, hopefully, become wiser and better individuals. This is not a coming of age album, it is a woman proclaiming that she knows what a life lived well truly means. John Stewart's *The Ghost Inside Of Me* features the line "I'm not who I ought to be." Using another man's words, Griffith sings of a knowledge that, given admission, can be a boundless personal treasure.

While wars divide the nations and the Vietnam War is indelibly imprinted on at least four compositions in this collection, there is most assuredly one event that once unified mankind, if only for a few moments. I'm talking of the giant leap on 21st July 1969, when Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on another world. *Armstrong*, a 1972 composition from Stewart's back catalogue, is complemented here by a third work, *Lost Him In The Sun*. Apart from the closing cut, which we'll return to later, the other cover songs are Paul Carrack's tender *Where Would I Be*, and James Hooker's *Cotton*. The latter is a wry folk flavoured reflection on Southern life.

Apart from the subjectively edgy *Shaking Off The Snow*, Nanci's writing is nigh faultless. The melodic opener, and album title cut, introduces the theme of time – the backbone of this collection. The you in *Travelling Through This Part Of You* is her former husband, Eric Taylor, a Vietnam veteran. War photographer, Georgette 'Dickey' Chapelle, killed in Vietnam, circa 1965, is remembered in

Pearl's Eye View. Roses On The 4th Of July, a duet with Michael Johnson, pursues the post Vietnam years.

Midnight In Missoula a gentle, image filled love song marries images of locations that are climatically hot and cold. Subjectively *Truly Something Fine* pursues the same vein. The penultimate *Last Song For Mother*, warrants no analysis since the title perfectly captures the reason for its existence. A celebration, a prodigal homecoming, a looking back, a forgiving – and a loving daughter's parting gift. And taking the form of an epilogue to the foregoing song, the Mann-Hilliard *In The Wee Small Hours* follows. The title track of a half million selling Frank Sinatra album forty six years ago, it has remained Nanci's mother's favourite song ever since.

Didn't someone once say, "To have loved once and lost, is at least to have lived." Hell, the precise words don't matter. Someone has learned the lesson well...

Arthur Wood.

CASEY NEILL TRIO

Portland West Appleseed APR CD 1044

As the title indicates so succinctly, the Portland in question is the one located in the North-Western state of Oregon. Recorded at St. John's Pub, half a dozen Casey originals stand shoulder to shoulder with material that traces a timeline from traditional, through The Carter Family and on to *I'm On Fire*, a 1984 contribution from the pen of Bruce Springsteen. The main musical influence at play here hails from Ireland, performed with an energetic passion and style that clearly confirms Neill's commitment to the traditions of the genre.

While studying ethnomusicology at Evergreen University in Washington State, Neill researched the traditions of Irish music, although he subsequently found employment as an environmental activist. In time, his lyrics became a channel through which he could protest current day injustices and the self-inflicted ills of mankind. *Angola* is an atypical example of Neill's approach, and recalls the three decade long incarceration (1967 – 1997) of an innocent man, the late Hayes Williams, in the corruption riddled Louisiana prison system.

As if to reinforce Neill's credentials as a musician, Ochs, Seeger, our own Bragg and Gaughan are mentioned in the accompanying press release. Casey, on the other hand, quotes the Pogues and Uncle Tupelo as influences during his formative years.

I suggest you give Neill a listen, because you'll soon discover that, with his third disc for the Appleseed imprint, he's making his own history, through a writing and performing style that uniquely merges his own visions with the Irish tradition.

In the UK via Koch Distribution.

Arthur Wood

REBECCA HALL

Sings! Listen Here LH 341

Inspired by the contents of Harry Smith's *Anthology Of American Folk Music*, a mere handful of years ago, New York based Hall set about creating material that leant heavily on traditional (folk) song forms. Seven examples are included here, plus renditions of *Winter Is Gone* and *I Know You Rider* – both traditional, while she closes with Ralph Stanley's *Darkest Hour Is Just Before Dawn*. There's an ethereal quality to Hall's voice, not unlike Gillian Welch's, and the use of cello and viola further underscores that effect. Subjectively, titles such as *Man Of Poor Fortune* and *Long Black Shore* hint at the direction taken by Hall's lyrics. Available online from www.cdbaby.com/rebeccahall

Arthur Wood

PETE SEEGER

Pete Seeger In Prague, 1964 Flyright FLY CD
68/69

The first disc of this 2 CD set lasts some seventy minutes, and features twenty-two songs performed by Pete at the ABC Theatre in Prague. The audience displays an obvious command of English, with waves of appreciative laughter following each of Seeger's humorous asides. His approach in this concert is to take the audience on a musical journey that traces the history and evolution of modern-day American (folk) music, by way of performing practical examples. As a genre, it has consistently drawn from numerous ethnic resources, be they native or imported.

The second disc contains seventeen tunes, including a couple of instrumentals, recorded during the following day in an empty studio at Radio Karlin. In the liner notes, Gene Deitch, an American film-maker who was resident in, and working in, communist Czechoslovakia at the time, describes how he came to make these, until now, private recordings. Well almost true, since a number of the Radio Kalin tracks appeared on a vinyl album released in 1964 by the Czech Supraphon imprint.

As Deitch explains in the booklet, he established a lasting friendship with Seeger, when they first met in 1946, in California. At the end of Disc 1, on Track 23, Seeger fondly recalls the Czech sessions, while the 16 page booklet also contains extensive notes penned by Pete that provide an insight into the source and history of each song performed on the live disc.

Malvina Reynolds's *Little Boxes*, the Weavers hits *Tzena Tzena Tzena* and *Goodnight Irene* and that staple of the sixties, *We Shall Overcome*, are among the many familiar songs found here. Interstate Music Ltd., 20 Endwell Road, Bexhill-On-Sea, East Sussex TN40 1EA.

Arthur Wood