

fiddle. She has a powerful way with a tortured ballad, and she really lets go on *Let It Go*, a sorrow-filled tune about a woman leaving a dead-end relationship.

She does not simply hint at vulnerability; she opens up and pours her heart out and infuses the tune with both heartbreak and resilience, creating a classic country heartbreaker. Stacy Grubb is modern and traditional country blended to perfection; the well-crafted acoustic instrumentation and vocals make this recording an everlasting collection of songs to treasure...

**Alan Cackett**

[www.stacygrubb.com](http://www.stacygrubb.com)

## Steve Goodman STEVE GOODMAN/ SOMEBODY ELSE'S TROUBLES

BGO Records

BGOCD1077

★★★★☆

*Underrated 1970s singer-songwriter's first two albums...*

It's strange how some records grow in stature with the passing of time. This pair of albums date from 1971 and 1973 and I bought them both as vinyl LPs around the time they were first released. Though at the time I really liked them, it was several years later that I became, for want of a better word, obsessed... something of a Steve Goodman junkie. I religiously bought each and every new album as it was released and drove friends mad with Steve Goodman music. For the uninitiated, Steve was a Chicago-based singer-songwriter who was diagnosed with leukaemia in his teens and died from kidney and liver failure after a bone marrow transplant operation in 1984. He was just 36 years old. Amazingly, this resilient and talented entertainer never allowed his illness to interfere with his life or career, and only a few fully realised just how ill he'd been for almost half of his life.

Steve's self-titled debut album released on Buddah Records was co-produced by Kris Kristofferson and Norbert Putnam and though recorded in Nashville, was never considered a country record, except by the more open-minded listeners like myself. I recall counting it as one of my top country albums of the year. It features Steve's two best-known songs—*City Of New Orleans* (probably the best train song ever written) and *You Never Even Called My By My Name*—plus such other understated gems



as *Would You Like To Learn To Dance*, *Yellow Coat* and superb renditions of John Prine's *Donald And Lydia* and Hank Williams' *Mind Your Own Business*. With such then-contemporary country pickers as David Briggs, Charlie McCoy, Ben Keith, Vassar Clements, Pete Wade and Grady Martin all being involved, it's little wonder that this is a great record, and one that has only improved with age.

There were delays and confusion when it came time for Steve to record his second album. Buddah packed him off to London in the summer of 1972 to work with a big-time producer, but the guy didn't seem too interested, so Steve hung around London and also appeared virtually unannounced at that year's Cambridge Folk Festival, where he made a big impression. Returning to America, it was decided that he should work with Cashman & West, who'd produced Jim Croce. But that didn't work out, so Steve turned to Atlantic staff producer Arif Mardin, who'd produced John Prine's initial albums and had just completed work on Jackie DeShannon's *JACKIE* on which she'd covered *Would You Like To Learn To Dance*.

*SOMEBODY ELSE'S TROUBLE* was recorded in New York and was another excellent collection of songs and distinctive performances that criss-crossed genres to produce what I affectionately call 'Steve Goodman music.' The undoubted highlight was Steve's definitive version of Mike Smith's *The Dutchman*; which led to numerous cover versions. Almost as good were Steve's songs like the jaunty *Six Hours Ahead Of the Sun*, the reflective *Song For David* (Steve's younger brother) and *Don't Do Me Any Favors Anymore*. Though not in any way 'country' that 'country' feel was still there, and Steve's affection for country was endorsed with the live versions of *I'm My Own Grandpa* and *The Auctioneer*. **Alan Cackett**

[www.bgo-records.com](http://www.bgo-records.com)

## Various Artists THE GOLDEN DEMON

Hemifran Records

★★★★☆

*Thematically 2-CD set explores chaos and transition*

In the wake of their *MUSIC FROM HOME* and *HYMNS FROM HOME* compilations, Swedish PR/music promoter Hemifran's



latest musical offering *THE GOLDEN DEMON* is a 100-minute, double disc set. The theme underpinning the 25 songs is chaos and transition, manifested on Earth by war, poverty, inequality and political upheaval. Money aka 'Golden Demon,' propels these man-made ills. The performers hail from both sides of the Atlantic, Disc 1 (aka Golden One) opens with Greg Copeland's album title song. Assisted by Carla Kihlstedt's violin and vocal, Copeland (vocal, acoustic guitar) recalls the crazy fever that gripped California for a handful of years following a 1849 discovery at Sutter's Mill. In state after state, farms and homes were abandoned in the hope of securing massive wealth.

Exploring the theology of unions vs. corporations, Julie Christensen's *Ten People* parallels Tennessee Ernie Ford's *16 Tons* and the 80-year-old classic *I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night*. Steve Noonan's *Another Good Man Down*, co-written with Maury Manseau founder of The Sunshine Company, similarly rails against corporate culture's callous heavy-handed ways. Stephen David Austin charts the 'mercurial rise/fame and fortune induced fall' of musicians who resided in the hills of Laurel Canyon circa the 1960s. Elsewhere Sid Griffin's delivers the Seeger-ish *Right 'Round The Bend*, Jenai Huff's gentle *Just Like Me* suggests that by 'getting out' a little more gated community inhabitants would discover we are very much alike, while the Doug Ingoldsby/Eugene Ruffalo collaboration *Us & Them* is self-explanatory by title alone. *Hat Check Girl*—aka Annie Gallup and Peter Gallway—portray, in a depressed economy, the daily struggles of homeless Jesse & Frank, and Liverpool's The Good Intentions close *One* with Woody Guthrie's *Rulin's*.

Hemifran's concoction of pop, rock, blues, country, jazz and folk begins on *Demon Too* with Luisa Jordan-Killoran's second offering *Demon Revisited*, *The Room Of The Demon* appeared on *One*. Contributions by prominent guests are a feature of *Too*. Eugene Ruffalo & Kenny Loggins furnish vocals on *Brothers*, which the latter penned with lead vocalist Doug Ingoldsby, rock guitarist Joe Satriani (G3, Mick Jagger) solos on Michael Ward's *Donkey Island*, and Poland's Mietek Szczesniak co-wrote *Signs* with Wendy Waldman (Bryndle, The Refugees) who sings on the tune. Elsewhere Michael Weston King delivers the anti-war *I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be A Soldier*, Bob Cheevers offers *Occupying Wall Street* c/w Beatles nods and *Too* ends with the

## DUSTY RELICS

sonically curious newscast Rogerson Noble by *SkyCountry*.

Standout, Allan Thomas' *How Long Can This Go On?* enquires how long the corporate rape of planet Earth's assets can continue before Mother Nature retaliates.

Arthur Wood

[www.hemifran.com/golden\\_demon](http://www.hemifran.com/golden_demon)

### The Tractors THE TRACTORS/ FARMERS IN A CHANGING WORLD

SPV 265922 2CD

★★★★

Steve Ripley's superb 1990s challenge to country radio, paired with the band's less successful sophomore outing

It took frontman, lyricist and producer Steve Ripley five years to put together his idea of the ultimate roots rock band. Ripley had paid his dues as an engineer for Leon Russell, Roy Clark and Clarence 'Gatemouth' Brown before working with Bob Dylan, John Hiatt, Ry Cooder, Jimmy Buffett and Eddie Van Halen. In 1987 he embarked on a new project. The band he assembled (Ron Getman on guitars, Jamie Oldaker on drums, multi-instrumentalist Walt Richmond on piano and Casey van Beek on bass) had equally prestigious pedigrees, having worked with Bonnie Raitt, Linda Ronstadt, Leonard Cohen, Bob Seger and Eric Clapton. It was not surprising that their debut album on Arista Records should make a splash.

Released in 1994, THE TRACTORS was an innovative mixture of country, blues, r&b and western swing, payin' its dues to past musical traditions while keeping things real in the present through songwriter Ripley's incisive yet laid-back earthy social observations on bankers, record companies politicians and the tax man. Mixing downhome music and Ripley's uncompromisingly gravelly vocals with ghostly tape effects and studio banter, the album yielded three chart singles, the biggest of which was the now-anthem *Baby Likes To Rock It*, featuring Telecaster king James Burton's inimitable guitar. *Baby* received massive radio and CMT coverage, while its follow-up singles *Tryin' To Get To New Orleans* and the wry humour of *Badly Bent* pressed home the album's back-to-roots message just when country-pop crossover was in overdrive. Other

highlights included the horn-laden, mood-setting *Tulsa Shuffle*, the tub-thumping *The Little Man*, featuring Raitt's whining slide guitar, the bluesy ballad *The Blue Collar Rock* and a respectable country-rock shakedown on Chuck Berry's *Thirty Days*. Featuring a host of illustrious guest musicians including Burton, Russell, Raitt, Cooder and the late JJ Cale, the album became the fastest-selling debut by a group and went double platinum by the end of the year.

The Tractors' significantly-titled second album FARMERS IN A CHANGING WORLD emerged in late 1998. Speaking to both the vicissitudes experienced by genuine farmers and the further commercialisation of the roots music scene, Ripley and his pals continued to present social themes through their now-established mix of American roots music. The band once again had many big-name guests in tow, this time adding Fats Kaplin, and paying tribute to their rockabilly legacy when Ripley was joined by Burton, Scotty Moore and DJ Fontana for the plodding medley *The Elvis Thing/Mystery Train*.

The album yielded two singles, a Tractors-style take on the traditional *Shortenin' Bread* and the driving *I Wouldn't Tell You No Lie*, but neither could repeat the success of *Baby*. While new guests and a rockabilly sensibility were good ideas, FARMERS IN A CHANGING WORLD did not see the Tractors moving on in any tangible sense and, with the public saturated with the band's sound through the massive exposure of their debut hit single, they were starting to sound like a one-trick pony. FARMERS' chart showing, did not match the stellar performance of its worthy predecessor. The band then went their separate ways, but still get together to play on each other's records, while Ripley continues to release 'Tractors' albums on his own Boy Rocking label.

Rather like the events surrounding Radney Foster's twin albums for Arista—the first was dynamite, the second disappointing—the Tractors' mid-1990s albums demonstrate perfectly the reverses of the record business. But their airing of serious social concerns through goodtime music steeped in country roots is today more relevant than ever, and recalls one of country music's most creative periods. **Jeremy Isaac**

[www.thetractors.com](http://www.thetractors.com)

### Tommy Cash SIX WHITE HORSES/RISE AND SHINE

SPV266162 CD

★★★★

The name is

recognised the talent is evident

The latest from SPV, a two on one bargain price remastered and reissue of classic country music, this one from the vastly underrated Tommy Cash. By the time Tommy started in the music business, the late 1960s big brother John was of course already riding high so Tommy got probably the only career advantage he was going to get from the family connection, a head start and that comprised being signed up by United Artists. A not too successful couple of years followed including a dreadfully ill-advised attempt to piggy back with a single called *I Didn't Walk The Line* enough said. However by and large the relationship with John was solid and respectful, they had both been through too much together in early life for it to be anything else.

In 1969 Tommy transferred to Epic and a much more enlightened and productive period followed and this re-release comprises the first two albums on Epic which as an illustration of the value on offer here just happened to be the most successful albums of Tommy's career. As was customary at the time the album took its title from the lead song and *Six White Horses*, Tommy's best ever selling single, is Larry Murray and Clyde Moody's tribute to the short and momentous lives of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. The rest of this first album comprises of Tommy's stylish versions of many well known country songs, *Green Green Grass of Home*, *The Long Black Veil*, Charley Pride's *I'm So Afraid of Losing You* and a hidden gem from the pen of the vastly underrated Billy Ed Wheeler *Don't Hold Your Breath*.

Also on that first album was Carl Perkins' *Rise And Shine* which was subsequently put out as a single, confirming its appeal by getting into the country top ten in 1970 and then became the title track on the second album here. It is well worth the double play. Also on RISE AND SHINE are three very well known Merle Haggard songs *The Fightin' Side of Me*, the (of the time) very sensitive *Irma Jackson* and the song every touring musician has on their lips for much of their

