...the new releases

and certainly worth a dance to with a loved one.

Mountain Dew has to be the finest of the sixteen tracks. With a quality opening beat that seems to run throughout the tune's duration, I'm sure this has been played to energetic efforts by both band and crowd in countless large and small venues due to how good it is. The traditional bluegrass Cripple Creek has an authentic sound about it which I'm sure die-hard fans of this great style of music would appreciate and probably include in the list of their top renditions as, just like Mountain Dew, is just so outrageously good. Even Hank Williams You Win Again is included on the album and a version which I'm sure ol' Hank wouldn't object to hearing. With some mighty swell pedal steel playing and vocals that certainly give credit to Hank, this song has the ability to transport you to one of Nashville's honky tonks due to its authentic sound. Only the most talented need apply when attempting to play Orange Blossom Special, and in the example of this band they can certainly count themselves in this musical camp. The highest of plaudits must go to the violinist Pete Hartley, as his playing is just marvellous. A faster version than many, this merely adds to the frenetic quality laid down by its creator Ervin T. Rouse who I'm sure feels very proud that his tune is still being played to this level over seventy years since first composing it.

A lengthy album it may be due to it consisting of sixteen tracks, this extensive playtime is by no means a negative aspect as each and every song finds themselves ending up just as good as each other. An awesome album to say the least performed by a band who are just simply outstanding. RH

www.bevpegg.co.uk

Black Crown Stringband BLACK CROWN STRINGBAND Independent

Undistinguished fast and furious

American traditional tunes

The world is filled with American bands playing rootsy and rural acoustic music and on the evidence of this EP the Black Crown Stringband are destined to be at best just another of those bands and at worst a below average one.

This is their debut outing, a seven track EP, six of which are traditional, and it displays plenty of musicianship and skill but is let down both by vocals and some strange recording decisions. Sometimes they make a conscious effort to sound 'old timey,' sometimes they record their vocals as a homage to Pinky and Perky, and unsurprisingly neither approach is successful. This is irritating to say the least, as when they get it together, as on the second half of Meet Me By The Moonlight they sound excellent, playing with sensitivity and understanding and adding nicely judged back porch harmonies. Unfortunately, this is really the only highpoint of the album as while their takes on traditional pieces

like Arnold Van Pelt's Tune are highly competent and energetic, they add little to the other recorded versions out there.

The band show enough here to enable one to imagine them tearing it up on stage at a summer festival, albeit while stomping down a very well-trodden road indeed, but on record, at present, they're a pass. JS www.myspace.com/blackcrownstringband

Blue Mother Tupelo HEAVEN & EARTH Diggin' Music ***



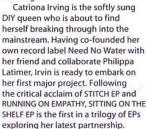
Very few real life couples manage to transform their romantic partnership to a successful music duo. There are of course exceptions—Johnny and June, Buddy and Julie-but these are rare. Ricky and Micol Davis, who married in 1994, are clearly madly in love. Describing HEAVEN & EARTH as 'great songs of love, faith, friendship, wandering and longing and beauty." the couple do not steer clear of cheesy declarations. Tupelo boasts possibly the cheesiest of them all, when he declares: 'I like it when you smile,' and she chirps: 'you make my life worth while,' in response.

Somehow it all works though. The sometimes cheesy lyrics are forgiven in favour of credible delivery. Micol outshines Ricky vocally, positioning herself somewhere between Sheryl Crow and Alanis Morrisette, she never puts a foot wrong. Dominating The War allows a showcase of her softer subtle sidings. Had someone with less vocal aptitude recorded The War, it could have easily become an overblown saccharine sweet ballad. Somehow Micol manages to save it from the treacherous terrain. Ricky ventures into ballad territory on the beautiful Biloxi. Micol's subtle harmonies balance against Ricky's brewing belt. As a duo, the chemistry sizzles. Their attraction radiates on opener; Always Lookin' sizzles with their retorting magnetism. Similarly Goin' Down Midnight and the gospelinfused Wish I Was In Heaven Sitting Down benefit from the dynamic duo's gravitational pull.

Blue Mother Tupelo don't always get the mix quite right. Tupelo pushes the boundaries slightly too far into uneasy sop. Musically Tupelo also disappoints, with the messy instrumentation creating a painful listening experience. Ramblin' Train fails to ever reach full speed. The vocal alterations sit uncomfortably over the riffs. Ramblin' Train had the potential to take Blue Mother Tupelo on a journey to the darker side, but stops a long way short of its goal destination. HEAVEN & EARTH fizzes enough to make an impression. Ricky and Micol Davis occasionally force their love to the fore and it distracts from their natural chemistry. When their declarations are calmed, the pair have the ability to shake shoulders and melt hearts. JW www.bluemothertupelo.com

Catriona Irving SITTING ON THE SHELF EP Need No Water Needno006

★★★ A sublime subtle success from a DIY songstress



It is a masterpiece of the understated. From the easy light vocal to the minimal musical accompaniment, Irving barely steps a foot wrong. Having aligned herself with Dale Grundle of the Sleeping Years on both Sitting On The Shelf Without Shelly and Untitled, Irving is succinctly spellbinding. Sitting On The Shelf Without Shelly bursts in and out of its bubbly life in less than two minutes. It oozes innocent charm. Untitled focuses on Irving's light vocal set against a sparing cello (as played by the Sleeping Years' Alex Beaumont). A delicate ode to love, Untitled is the perfect opening track to any compilation CD intended for a quiet night cuddling your lover.

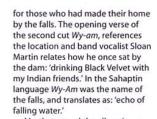
Always keeping things concise, it is the solo effort Measurements, which truly captivates. Harking back to earlier works, Irving's whimsical approach shines. In an interesting twist, Irving has decided to include the Plaisir de France Remix of Sitting On The Shelf Without Shelly in the collection. Paris-based DJ Julien Plaisir De France demonstrates a clear understanding of the minimalist appeal of Irving's work and astutely reworks Sitting On The Shelf Without Shelly retaining the original's grace,

SITTING ON THE SHELF EP is a delicate offering that will have a cult following. Irving's fan base is fast growing and her appeal universal. A gracefully bewitching EP, which won't be sat on the shelf for very long. JW www.myspace.com/catrionairvingmusic

Celilo
BENDING
MIRRORS
Homesweet Music
**
Portland, Oregon

band delivers distorted lyrical

images and fine melodies
A six-piece combo—electric
guitars (mainly), bass, drums, pedal
steel and keyboards—Celilo is
based out of Portland, Oregon and
BENDING MIRRORS is their fourth
album. The history lesson aka how
to name your band ... in 1957, Celilo
Falls, on the Columbia River one of
the largest waterfalls in the West
had, for at least ten thousand years,
been a sacred fishing ground for
Native Americans. It was flooded by
the creation of the Dalles Dam, an
occurrence that proved disastrous



Martin penned the album's twelve songs and an undercurrent of melancholy pervades his words. Set in a churchyard surreal ghostly images drift through album opener Easter Lily, while Bush Pilot is a getaway song. Swapping electric guitars for acoustic models, Pinata is an obtuse but ultimately sad love song. As for the many quest musicians Annalisa Tornfelt delivers sterling contributions on fiddle and harmony vocals, particularly on the country-tinged Pink Sofa. Consistently supported by strong melodies, the adjectives surreal and obtuse are appropriate descriptors of Sloan's use of English. The thought occurs that BENDING MIRRORS perfectly describes the effect achieved by his lyrics. Peculiar yet oddly addictive, probably best describes the listening experience.

http://www.myspace.com/celilo

Cherry Lee
Mews
SOUTHBOUND TRAIN
Cherry Jam CLM02

Classic blues from young British vocalist



Welsh-born Cherry Lee Mews second album is simply an excellent example of female-fronted classic blues sung and played with fire, conviction, and the kind of passion that keeps blues music vital. The album opener, All You Need, for instance, gets things off to a rocking start with a powerful vibe that burns with a blues flame, while the infectious Shake That Thing has the kind of hook that's tailor made for adult-oriented listeners. Some great acoustic guitar by co-producer Max Milligan adds much to this track. The passionate and burning vocals on Midnight In Memphis fuel the emotive lyrics with a rich and fervent style and grace. In contrast there's a late-night jazzy feel to Johnny Mercer's Travellin' Light, whilst Memphis Minnie's Kissing In The Dark swings wildly with great Dobro and harmonica interplay. Cherry Lee teams up with Milligan to contribute some fine original songs including the vibrant and energetic title song and the sensual Let's Go Back to the Beginning.

Murphy's vocals reach deep down inside capturing the true essence of these soulful and emotive blues compositions. With heart straight from the south, SOUTHBOUND TRAIN comes out as a terrific selection of songs that would help fill out any great music collection. While she may be a relative newcomer to the scene, don't expect Cherry Lee's second CD to go unnoticed; this album is here for fans of classic blues as polished as