

...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 of 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 playlist 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

★★★★
Husband and wife
duo show just
how a partnership
should really work



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 Morissette, 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 gospel-infused *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* fizzles 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



Catriona Irving is the softly sung DIY queen who is about to find herself breaking through into the mainstream. Having co-founded her own record label Need No Water with her friend and collaborator Philippa Latimer, Irvin is ready to embark on her first major project. Following the critical acclaim of *STITCH EP* and *RUNNING ON EMPATHY*, *SITTING ON THE SHELF EP* is the first in a trilogy of EPs exploring her latest partnership.

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

for those who had made their home by the falls. The opening verse of the second cut *Wy-am*, references the location and band vocalist Sloan Martin relates how he once sat by the dam: 'drinking Black Velvet with my Indian friends.' In the Sahaptin language *Wy-Am* was the name of the falls, and translates as: 'echo of falling water.'

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 guest 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.

AW

<http://www.myspace.com/celilo>

Cherry Lee Mews SOUTH- BOUND 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