

## NEW RELEASES

string arrangements by Butler and the classically-trained Maguire.

Opening with the soft piano and acoustic guitar chords of *Beautiful*, the album soon progresses to the punchy, drum-led *Don't Speak*, and finds its wings with the soul-searching *Rain* and playful, basslines of *Bicycle Made For Two*. Love is a constant theme here, but these are not all starry-eyed tales of new romance or heartbreak, as the powerful *Over The Waterfall* demonstrates, with its references to voices in the head, loss of reason and wanting to die because of an inability to cope with the rollercoaster that is life, all underpinned by a pounding beat and synths and deeper, introspective vocals. *A Rose Is Nothing* continues the dark theme, speaking of life's endless stream of strange illusions as it chronicles the angst of the cheat's victim. The closing title track uses sweeping backing arrangements and powerful rhythms to round off the album's underlying meditation on amour with the observation that: 'It's love that saves us when all else has failed us.'

Maguire certainly has a way with words, and some of the infectious tunes here would be deserving of single success, but the regular formula of starting a song quietly with muted piano or acoustic guitar lines before building to full-on drum-programmed, multi-layered vocal chorus arrangements can become somewhat repetitive. Don't get me wrong, this works well on *Waterfall*, which is indeed the album's strongest cut, and this is not to denigrate Maguire's talent as a writer, singer or musician, but, with the exception of the lovely *Bicycle* and the loping *Old Valentine*, a pinch of variety wouldn't go amiss—and just to be clear, it's a far cry from traditional country or folk music. **Jeremy Isaac**

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

### Raina Rose CALDERA

Raina Rose Music

★★★★☆

*Rose's ten new songs are swaddled in beautiful sonic cocoons*

Apart from album producer/Raina's sweetheart Andrew Pressman (bass, vibraphone, acoustic and electric guitars, vocals) Austin-based Rose (vocals, acoustic guitar) is mainly accompanied on her fifth solo album by Danny Malone (keyboards,



piano, acoustic guitar) and Robin MacMillan (drums, percussion, tambourine). There are guest contributions from a coterie of 'local musicians' which I'll enumerate as necessary. Raina's trio compatriots California's John Elliott and New York's Anthony da Costa also support—we reviewed their debut CATXNY EP in the July/August issue. The liner affirms the appearance on *Woodsmoke* and *Trouble* of a 'folk choir' composed of further 'local musicians'; including Carrie Elkin, Danny Schmidt, Dana Falconberry, Matt Bauer, Rebecca Loebe, Jack Wilson, Vanessa Lively, Jon Brooks, Datri Bean, Sam Baker and Grace Park.

The ten songs on CALDERA were penned by Raina Rose, with the opening lyric *Secret* focusing on a 'place everybody goes when they're asleep.' On the latter, there's added support from Chris Cox's melodica and Colin Brooks' lap steel. Having already mentioned the 'folk choir,' *Woodsmoke* opens with the steely, echo-enhanced sound of cymbals and a kick drum. They're subsequently joined by acoustic guitar and piano, while toward the close the narrator verifies: 'I got the Rosetta Stone.' Embracing Rose's earlier lines: 'To decipher I'd need a decoder ring, On my left hand finger, That's improbable,' I'd peg *Woodsmoke* as a love song, that has delicately (and intentionally) blurred edges.

On the invitation to *Swing Wide The Gates*, Paul Curerri (vocals) and Anthony da Costa (electric guitar) guest, while there's allusion to a: 'Tiny child sweet sweat and creams, Asleep against your momma's breast'—could that be Emmett Rose Pressman who is rapidly approaching two years of age, and to whom this album is dedicated? A vigorous drumbeat reminiscent of Motown in its heyday propels *I Lost It*, and there are intermittent but soaring vocal additions by Messrs. Malone, Loebe and Park, while toward the close the narrator confesses: 'I am just a girl, Who paid a handsome sum for nothing, Looking for a home without any walls.' The ensuing *Badlands* is graced by contributions from John Elliott (piano) and Colin Brooks (lap steel).

Opening with a compliment: 'In all of these travels, I never saw something so beautiful as you,' by the close the lyric to *Apostle* poses the question: 'Tell me my sweet apostle, Are you just a passing season?' If I said that the 'folk choir' shone on *Woodsmoke*, on the melodically happy-go-lucky *Trouble* they're magnificently incandescent. Anthony da Costa (vocals)

and 'Scrappy' Jud Newcomb (electric guitar) guest on album closer *Hands*, it's the sixth CALDERA lyric to employ the word 'heart.' For the record 'Caldera' is a cauldron-like volcanic feature, in which land collapses following an eruption of lava. Employing microscopic attention to detail Pressman has enveloped Rose's songs in beautiful sonic cocoons. **Arthur Wood**

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

### LeAnn Rimes SPITFIRE

Rhino/Curb

★★★★★

*Upfront and personal with her most revealing and honest music ever ...*



LeAnn Rimes has been recording for the same label for her entire career and sold more than 40 million records. But SPITFIRE, her 11th studio album, is the last for Mike Curb's company. What a way to go out. Probably her best album yet, and most definitely her most personal as regards the songwriting. What we have here is basically an intimate diary to music. The US tabloids and paparazzi have had a feeding frenzy with 30-year-old LeAnn and her love life. Outed for an extra marital affair with married actor Eddie Cibrian (40) in 2009, after both getting divorced they were married in 2011. But Eddie's ex-wife has attacked LeAnn in the media ever since. So, after a period of hiding herself away, LeAnn came back literally spitting fire in the songs on this record. This is a very credible piece of work, and with mega producer Darrell Brown co-writing and co-producing (with LeAnn); it was probably always going to be. A man whose songs and production have been responsible for over 70 million units in record sales.

LeAnn's vocals are still instantly recognisable. But perhaps with more aggression on the tempo stuff and a heck of a lot of real emotion on the slower numbers. This most definitely defines 'honest.' Not just another record; this was the raw truth being spilled out of heart and soul. The title track says it all: 'I ain't gonna get caught up in your muck and mire. You make me wanna spit fire, spit fire, spit fire.' There are no hidden messages here. All these songs are both confessional and the middle finger to those who have slagged her off in the media as a home-wrecker. The gloves are off ...