

NEW RELEASES

The Buffalo Gals WON'T YOU BE CRUEL TO BE KIND

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GGRCD017

★★★★

The Gals deliver yet another charmingly unique collection of songs

The Buffalo Gals might just be one of the finest old-time country string bands to date, and by far one of the most talented and inventive groups I've so far come across. This year, the six-piece ensemble—consisting of award-winning Appalachian fiddler and banjoist Kate Lissauer, five-string banjoist John Whelan, ukuleleist and guitarist Sooz Clare, flatfooting percussionist Sibylle Riesen and bassist Eve Morris—return with their latest release *WON'T YOU BE CRUEL TO BE KIND*, cleverly paying homage to old-timey roots music that inspired some of the rooting greats, and somewhat giving a history lesson of the migration and integration of various music styles.

There's some great old-timey bluegrass numbers on the record, from the Irish-infused *Jerusalem Ridge* and *Patty On The Turnpike/Shady Grove* to the fast paced and pickings of *Falls Of Richmond*, *I'm A Wild And Restless Cowboy* and *Greasy Coat*; their passion and talent for the craft shining through, and it has to be said, they come together and do it so well.

Sweet Marie, an 1893 classic, opens the album beautifully with some delicious soaring fiddle, laying the tone for the rest of the record—in fact; you can even hear the percussive sounds of Sibs 'flatfooting' and even more so on the superbly self-composed *Frankie*—with the imaginatively re-worked *Captain Had A Bulldog* following closely behind. All the Gals take it in turns on the lead mic and harmony; with Pete leading the herd (and Kate and Sooz harmonising) on the forlorn, fiddle-led Hank Williams gem *Weary Blues From Waiting* and Kate and Sooz dueting on the rather comical, yet sad account of *I Left Her Standing There (With A Doodad In Her Hair)*—a tale of unrequited love by the Dezurik Sisters whom became stars for their unique vocalisations, and the two Buffalo Gals here recreate that to a tee.

Of course, the album wouldn't be complete if it weren't for the inclusion of some self-pens and self-arranged numbers; and the old-timey title track *Won't You Be*



Cruel To Be Kind? and closing song *Sweet Bye And Bye* are just two of them—the former written by Sooz herself and delivered in true Buffalo Gals style, with soaring fiddle, four-part vocals (Pete, Kate, Sibs and Sooz) and flourishes of banjo, whilst the latter, consisting solely of Kate, Pete and Sooz's voices brings the album to a languid, old-timey gospel close.

The band has got something really special here and has made it into what could become their trademark sound. For those of you who like music from the yesteryears, then this one comes highly recommended. Emily Saxton

www.buffalogals.co.uk

Simone Dinnerstein & Tift Merritt NIGHT

Sony Classical

★★★★

Classical music meets country and folk in a tasteful fourteen selection exploration

It's only a matter of months since Tift's *TRAVELING ALONE* was released, and unheralded—certainly on Merritt's web site, until the day of its release—she partners a fellow New York based classical pianist Simone Dinnerstein on *NIGHT*. Merritt contributes vocals, with occasional acoustic guitar/harmonica support on 12 of the 14 offerings. In 2007 music teacher Dinnerstein's self-financed recording of Bach's *GOLDBERG VARIATIONS*, released by Telarc, promptly peaked at number one on the Billboard Classical Chart. Brought to national and international concert platform prominence, Simone signed with Sony Classical in 2010.

This unique union furnished the opportunity to, individually, cross borders into previously uncharted musical territory. The challenges they faced forms the focus of a three page, liner booklet interview (with the duo). In terms of content, Juilliard-trained Simone is the sole contributor to Alexander Siloti's arrangement of Bach's *Prelude In B Minor* while The Cohen Variations—is an almost seven-minute long exposition of familiar Lenny melodies. Featuring sterling support from Dinnerstein's grand piano, *NIGHT* includes a quartet of Merritt compositions—two are brand new, two are already familiar—and cover material that runs the gamut of Schubert's *Night*



And *Dreams*, through traditional folk songs *Wayfaring Stranger* and *I Will Give My Love An Apple*, to contemporary times and Billie Holiday's *Don't Explain*, Johnny Nash's *I Can See Clearly Now* and the darkly hued Patty Griffin penned album title song.

Arthur Wood

<http://www.simonedinnerstein.com/>

The Milk Carton Kids THE ASH & CLAY

Anti Records

★★★★☆

Two acoustic guitars and voices magic contemporary music from folk revival sounds

The Milk Carton Kids played the closing night of the 2012 Kerrville Folk Festival, and with no prior knowledge, purely based on their name; I expected another (yawn) bluegrass string band. Hallelujah; the duo's 40 minute set was an energetic and memorably melodic acoustic guitar and vocal harmony revelation, infused by, sometimes self-deprecating, always razor sharp between song wit. Kenneth Pattengale and Joey Ryan were raised in Eagle Rock, California and prior to joining forces in 2011 had pursued solo careers, each leavened by a significant back catalogue of recordings.

Bearing their individual names, they debuted with the self-released live set *RETROSPECT*, wherein they revisited songs penned separately. Morphing into The Milk Carton Kids, the studio set *PROLOGUE* followed soon afterwards with words and music credited to the duo. As well as hard copies, both releases were offered as free web downloads. Two years on, those titles have been downloaded a combined total of 150,000 occasions. In April 2013, The Milk Carton Kids undertake their European/UK concert debut.

Signing late last year with Anti Records, the Silver Lake, Los Angeles based imprint, the Kids self-produced *THE ASH & CLAY*. The 12 song set was recorded, mixed and mastered by Ryan Freeland (Ray LaMontagne, Joe Henry). Gus Van Sant's latest movie *Promised Land* released *Stateside* in late December 2012, prominently features *Snake Eyes* from *THE ASH & CLAY*, as well as *The Jewel Of June* plus the album title song. Concurrently, *Snake Eyes* was released as a single, and pursuing further Van Sant's movie, this

