

fantastic version of the Mick Jagger and Keith Richards song *You Got The Silver* from the Rolling Stones 1969 album *LET IT BLEED*. Very good CD from this ever improving and evolving band. **DK**
www.crookedstill.com

Danu
SEANCHAS
 Own Label

★★★★

A band that let their music seep into your soul with a mellowness that is rare to find in these ultra clever days of 'folk fusion'

Since 1995, the band Danu have carved their name with pride along with the likes of De Dannan, Altan and Clannad for their attractive arrangements of Gaelic/Celtic songs and music. They may not be the kind of band that will hit you between the eyes with a gael force intensity but rather, like a fine port or brandy allow their music to seep into your soul with a mellowness that is rare to find in these ultra clever days of 'folk fusion'. Without the need to 'prove' themselves with flash performances of finger flailing that leaves the listener flabbergasted and breathless at the end of each track...although I'm sure they can...each of the members—Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh (vocals, flute), Benny McCarthy (accordion), Oisín McAuley (fiddle), Eamon Doorley (bouzouki) and Donal Clancy (guitar)—rely on the art of subtlety to convey their message. Now, I'd be the first to admit that I still can't get my head around the intricacies of the Gaelic language even though English translations are available in the accompanying book but I think I can safely say that for those of us too lazy or should that be ignorant (?) would be seductively attracted to the soothing tones of Nic Amhlaoibh. I don't know about you, but in this fast paced, frenetic way of life we've all become accustomed too the chance to chill out and luxuriate in a soft, comforting blanket doesn't feel such a bad idea. **PF**
www.danu.net

Half Seas Over
HALF SEAS OVER
 Brownswood Recordings
 BWOOD047CDP

★★★★

Lost introspection from a midway point

HALF SEAS OVER, the Free Online Dictionary informs us, refers to a state of being 'stupefied or excited by a chemical substance (especially alcohol)'. We can trace the expression back to find it had nautical origins and so derive that the partnership at the core of this project—being folk-minded singer-songwriter Adam McBride-Smith and jazz pianist Elan Mehler—has cast itself as a pair of drunken sailors. Indeed, the spirit of imbibing runs through this debut, notably on the rowdy near-honky tonkery of *Sunday's Empire*, though there is a more staid and sober mentality holding it in check.



Eliza Gilkyson, John Gorka & Lucy Kaplansky

RED HORSE
 Red House Records

★★★★

Meet Red Horse folk music's latest super group

For John it's a first, at least on record, but the girls have been there before. Back in 2002, with Ad Vanderveen and Iain Matthews, Eliza was a member of the Euro-American trio *More Than A Song*. For a couple of years late last century Lucy joined Richard Shindell and Dar Williams in the mega-phenomenon *Cry Cry Cry*. A decade into the new millennium with all three artists signed to Red House Records we have *Red Horse*, folk's latest supergroup. What's in a name? Well, there was Gorka's mid-1990s humorous fantasy *Flying Red Horse*, inspired by the Mobil gas station sign.

More Than A Song performed original material, while *Cry Cry Cry* focused on well-chosen (mainly contemporary folk) covers. When you've already got the t-shirt, there's got to be a new twist! On the harmony rich *RED HORSE*, each trio member takes the lead vocal on four songs—one of their own (new or old), one from each of the other members and finally, one cover. *RED HORSE* was assembled from New York, Minnesota and Texas sessions, those being the respective domiciles of the participants. Eliza's long-time Austin based associate Mark Hallman injected continuity by way of mastering the final result at his Congress House studio.

Eliza reaches back to early 1968 and *LAST TIME AROUND*, the third and final Buffalo Springfield album. On that recording Neil Young's *I Am A Child* was tantamount to a solo version. Gilkyson launches this twelve-song album with an interpretation that's both innocent and intimate. Kaplansky's intense *Scorpion* opened her 1996 sophomore release *FLESH AND BONE* and here, two seconds short of the original version, Lucy reprises it. Later, she visits Gilkyson's similarly structured *Sanctuary*. A night-time equine fantasy (and contemporary commentary—hell, it's Eliza!), Gorka takes the lead on the new Gilkyson creation *Wild Horse*. Joined vocally by Gorka, Eliza sensually tackles and ends up owning Lucy's road/love song *Promise Me*. On the ensuing folk/pop tune *Don't Mind Me* the vocal roles are reversed, while the composers remain the same—that is, Lucy Kaplansky and husband Rick Litvin. Gorka's interpretation of *Coshieville*, penned by the late Stuart MacGregor (who died in 1973), brings a magnificent lost gem to the table. The surname of this Scottish anaesthetist, poet, songwriter, and novelist is misspelt in the liner. The setting for this bittersweet recollection of love and life is Scotland's West Highlands, where, during the decade following the end of WWII, numerous hydro-electric dams were constructed. It appears that *Coshieville* is a village not far from the Perthshire town of Aberfeldy.

With each advancing verse the story is revealed in the new Gorka creation *If These Walls Could Talk*—'They'd repeat her name, they would point at you, Showing whose to blame.'

From the latter's *TEMPORARY ROAD* (1992) Eliza reprises *If I Could Forget To Breathe* listed on the *RED HORSE* liner as *Forget To Breathe*, while the penultimate selection is her own *Walk Away From Love*. Aided vocally by John and Eliza, *RED HORSE* closes with Lucy's rendition of the traditional *Wayfaring Stranger*. For Lucy it's something of a reprise, as she was lead vocalist on the version that appeared on *SHIFTING SANDS OF TIME* (2001) the debut release by Berklee's *Wayfaring Strangers*. **AW**
<http://www.myspace.com/redhorsefolk>



McBride-Smith prefers to think of the name as evoking a midway point, a meeting in the middle, both geographically and thematically: there was an ocean between the two as they wrote these songs, and their disparate styles necessarily had to find a middle ground in order to function together. The idea of a middle ground should not suggest a compromise as both the folk and jazz mentalities at play here manage to realise their own individual potentials while still meshing satisfyingly into a coherent sound.

This is sombre music to be listened to in the wee small hours, lifted from its gloom often enough that it doesn't end up sinking into it but nonetheless resolutely melancholic. *The New Breed*, not only because of its title, achieves a noirish, spindly I SEE A DARKNESS vibe. Cypress Grove sees McBride-Smith pulling off a big soulful croon, while his whispered delivery of *Just to Clear My Head* suggests an unwelcome lucidity that stands in pained counterpoint to the title.

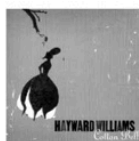
At 50 minutes this record becomes a little oppressive, just a little hard to take in one go, but this speaks also to its power, to the potency of its emotional rawness. It's a very affecting record and a very accomplished debut from a promising partnership. **AlexC**

Hayward Williams
COTTON BELL
 Continental Song City CSCCD1063

★★★★

Eight heartfelt songs from this fine singer-songwriter

This is the follow up to the acclaimed debut *ANOTHER SAILOR'S*



DREAM from Wisconsin native Hayward Williams. Armed with his acoustic guitar and blessed with a fine voice, Hayward uses both to construct and form the images created from the lyrics of his thought-provoking story songs. Standout tracks on the album are the reflective *I Will Understand* and the beautiful ballad *Mockingbird* that includes a delightful guitar solo. Folk/Americana album that is worth a listen. **DK**
www.haywardwilliams.com

The Iain Ad Venture
RIDE THE TIMES
 Turtle Records

★★★★

A decade on, this Dutch based duo deliver their sophomore set

A decade on from the appearance of their self-titled debut, which was recorded in concert at the Café Amer in Amen, Holland, the Dutch based duo of Ad Vanderveen and our own Iain Matthews return with a fourteen-song studio culled collaboration. The formula on their debut disc ran to songs penned by Iain and Ad plus a slew of covers, and that's pretty much how *RIDE THE TIMES* unfolds.

Aided by Iain, Ad takes the lead vocal on the first selection, the late Warren Zevon's *Mohammed's Radio*. Bobby Darin's 1962 US number 3/U.K. number 2 pop hit *Things* is slowed to almost walking pace by the duo. Iain and Ad share the lead vocal on Neil Young's Buffalo Springfield era blues classic *Mr. Soul*, and it's followed by Lynn Miles' up-tempo 'get me the hell out of Los Angeles' anthem *Unravel*. A live version appeared on Iain's double album *CONTACT* (2007). The half-dozen



cover songs are completed by Chip Taylor quasi-religious themed *Him Who Saved Me* and the old Tom Waits' chestnut *Heart Of Saturday Night*.

The gently paced *Action*, the first of a trio of Matthews-penned originals, is followed by Ad's *Time So Green. Blossom*, penned by Iain, Pete Droge and Danish musician Rasmus Hedeboe dates from 2001 when the threesome participated in a week-long songwriting workshop on Denmark's Samso Island. *RIDE THE TIMES* includes a reprise of Ad's already familiar *The Moment That Matters*, and he penned the album title song. The standout number is undoubtedly the traditional sounding, fifth Vanderveen original *Carry Me Back*. Ad's touring companion Kersten de Ligny adds her voice to the latter and it closes this album. **AW**
<http://www.iainmatthews.nl/>

Lucky Holloway
UP THE HIGHWAY
 Bootcut Records

★★★★

Country blues sung by a man whose scars run deep

With a voice which quivers at every emotion, it would be difficult to say you are not a fan of Lucky Holloway. Singing the blues with pure defeat while never straying away from his country roots, Holloway is quiet possibly the perfect singer and musician to infuse country with the blues. Featuring twelve self-written tracks, Lucky proves his talent as a singer and songwriter, encouraging that the pain he sings about must surely be real. *This Carnival of Life* has Brent Wright take lead on electric guitar, allowing

