

BRUM

55p

The Midlands Music Monthly and more!

BEAT

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Deacon Blue

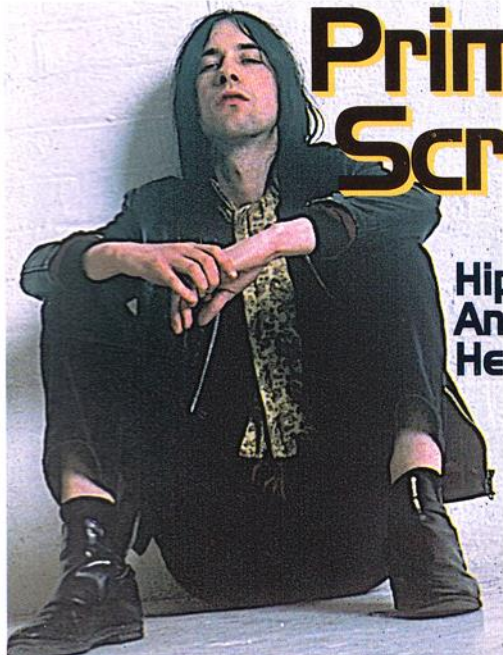


Ricky Ross

On The Greatest Hits

Primal Scream

Hip-shakers
And
Heartbreakers



The Wonder Stuff

*Re-Constructing
With Mike Davies*



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★★★★
Steve Morris

KEVIN CONNOLLY

My My My

(Eastern Front Records / Topic)

Boston based Connolly's album is a celebration of a year spent with his new wife in Italy. It was obviously an inspirational time, for the fourteen songs that it precipitated are a mighty fine bunch, lyrically and melodically.

Connolly delivers them in fine, easy going voice whilst the arrangements enhance rather than clutter with some some perfectly judged picking.

Quite how the US manages to produce so many singer-writers of this quality is a mystery, but long may they continue, songs of this quality are to be treasured and Connolly's contribution should be lauded and nurtured.

★★★★
Steve Morris

(... and, yes, country purists, an element of humour came into the decision to place the above review in 'your' section! Ed.)

JUDY COLLINS

Judy Sings Dylan (Geffen)

When you get such an excellent album it's sad to learn the record label couldn't give a toss if anyone knew about it or not. Not being a 'priority', it's been allowed to virtually slip out unnoticed, an appalling insult to an artist of Collins' standing and talent, while lesser but more fashionable signings are hyped to buggery. Collins was one of the earliest seminal Dylan interpreters and this shows he's not lost her touch, bringing an unexpected compassionate, even romantic perspective to both classic bitter Bobisms like *It's All Over Now Baby Blue*, *Like A Rolling Stone* and *Just Like A Woman*, and more recent disillusionments such as *Simple Twist Of Fate* and *Dark Eyes*. And a gorgeous version of *Love Minus Zero* into the bargain.

★★★★
Mike Davies

KELLY WILLIS

Well Travelled Love / Bang Bang (both MCA)

Willis' '90 and '91 albums finally see UK release lists as MCA catch up with country's growing impact in the UK. Not that Willis is your typical country lady airhead. The Janis Martin ticket stub that adorns the *Well Travelled* debut set is the clue; Martin was sold as the 'female Elvis' in the late fifties and Kelly has absorbed a significant amount of rockabilly attitude with which to colour and strengthen her honk tonk beat. She also has the sense to cover some great writers, with Steve Earle, Joe Ely, Jim Lauderdale and Monte Warden among those reaping credits. Recommended, especially as both sets are mid priced.

★★★ (each)
Steve Morris

VANCE GILBERT

Edgewise (Philo / Topic)

Once upon a time, Vance Gilbert was a cabaret performer in Boston niteries. We're talkin' a Tony Bennett and Johnny Mathis angle here. Hardly the bona fide scufflin', dues paid roots [or was that routes?] and hard times of a new found folk hero.

Truth to tell, African American Gilbert's musical leanings are more acoustic soul / jazz than acoustic folk. Of the dozen tunes featured, Country Western Rap probably works best in a live situation. The stereotypes explored in the latter lyric, only further support my long held contention that the rap genre is overloaded with vitamin C. Think about it.

Elsewhere, there's an interesting arrangement of the Henley / Frey composed Eagles classic, *Lyn' Eyes*. The voice of Vance is undoubtedly an impressive and hypnotic weapon, particularly on the acappella *King Of Rome*. Unfortunately, Gilbert's compositions are mostly underwhelming in lyrical content, the latter opinion being somewhat at odds with Scott Alarik's liner notes. Jonatha Brooke from *The Story*, provides backing vocals on *I'm Watching My Heart* - a curious medical exploration, if ever I heard one. This debut is specially tailored for late night listening.

★★
Arthur Wood

VICKY PRATT KEATING

Blue Apples (Own label - Import)

All the signs are in the firmament. It's time to observe a new sun rise. On this more tangible Earthbound level, beware of female songstresses with triple barrelled names who reside in the Washington D.C. area. Back in 1986, MC2 was picking up Wammies (Washington Area Music Awards) before she graduated to Grammys at the dawn of the nineties. Circa 1993, Vicky Pratt Keating entered the same college with her first Wammie.

Although she hails from the same acoustic contemporary folk baseline which spawned Chapin Carpenter, Keating employs a planet wide palette of instruments with which to paint the backdrop to her songs. *Blue Apples* is the first recording by Vicky to enjoy a CD release, and constitutes an opportunity to enter her world of verse for around forty five minutes. A self titled, self produced cassette preceded it, circa 1990. Her latest effort is ethereal, fey, obtuse, intelligent, divine, occasionally self doubting and at turns self confident and assertive. Truth to tell, Keating strides across the rainbow of life's emotions with the ease of a veteran.

Vicky Pratt Keating undertakes her debut UK tour in April / May. Considering that *Blue Apples* is self released, there's a dual treat in store. See her in the flesh before one of the majors snaps her up and buy your copy of *Blue Apples* while you have the opportunity.

★★★★
Arthur Wood

RE-ISSUES

VARIOUS ARTISTS

On A Winter's Night (Philo / Topic)

From New Yorker Willie Nininger's self composed and atmospheric opening title track, through to the terminal stop and the heavenly choir of Anne Hills, Priscilla Herdman, Cindy Mangsen and Steve Gillette on the late Jan Harmon's *Stars*, this Christine Lavin masterminded (reissue) release is dripping with literary excellence. Among the remaining players in this hefty and talented fifteen are David Wilcox, Patty Larkin, Julie Gold, Bill Morrissey, John Gorka, Cheryl Wheeler, Dave Mallett, Sally Fingerett and Megan McDonough.

★★★
Arthur Wood

BLUES & JAZZ

BIG SUGAR

Five Hundred Pounds (Provogue)

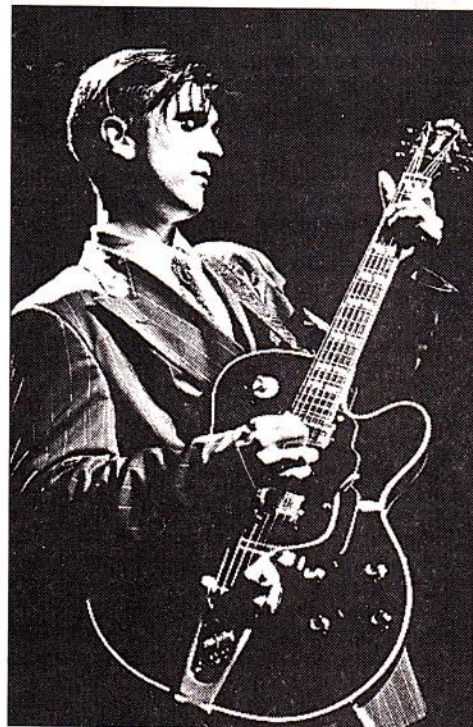
Canadian bar-room blues merchants with an authentic feel and a high degree of flair. Sadly, like most of the genre, it's the sweat of the live appearance that sells albums as souvenirs rather than the album stimulating the gig attendance.

Big Sugar's newbie sits square with that notion too. It's all rather good but without any personality to hang the

listening experience on, ultimately hollow.

★★
Steve Morris

Big Sugar



ANDY SHEPPARD

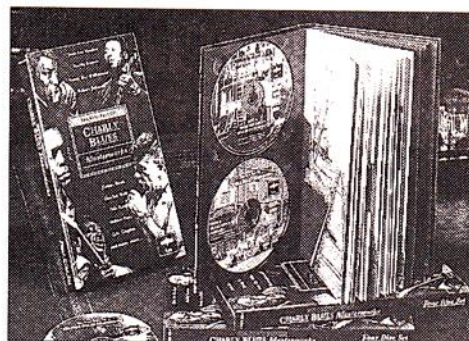
Delivery Suite (Blue Note)

Recorded live at Ronnie Scott's (London) by the Big Co-Motion line-up who performed it at the Town Hall recently (and who return to Scott's Birmingham 'office' around the time you read this), the 70 minute *Delivery Suite* is intended as a companion disc to last year's *Rhythm Method*, which even came in a two disc jewel case for your convenience.

Marketing strategies aside, the brass-heavy big band sound swoops around the listener's living room like a house-martin on acid, never allowing its next switch in direction to be anticipated. Readers who have only strayed into the jazz section by mistake should certainly approach this eventful recording with an open mind.

★★★★
Andy Mabbett

RE-ISSUES



VARIOUS

The Very Best Of Charly Blues Masterworks (Charly)

OK, so the 80 tracks presented in this four CD and sixty page box set have been issued over and over ...