

Gillette also penned the closing selection, *Home By Dark* wherein the narrator focuses astutely on the themes of freedom, a day job, and the rich rewards that lie in the (family) ties that bind.

When not taking the lead vocal, Steve or Cindy furnish a background vocal, and the latter takes the lead on an interpretation of longtime friend, touring and recording collaborator, Anne Hills' *Some Boats*, the traditional *Sur La Route De Dijon*, and Scottish Borders murder ballad, *The Two Sisters* aka Child # 10. Mangsen's instrumental contribution comes in the form of concertina renditions of her own *Manomet Waltz* followed by Scottish fiddle player J. Scott Skinner's *The Mathematician*.

Steve's 'I heard it at the Kerrville Folk Festival' connection on this album amounts to Joe Carlson's *Blue*—a subtle bedtime tale about the environment and the canopy that shields our planet. Talented guitarist, Dick Rosmini, who played on Steve's debut solo album for Vanguard Records way back in 1967 was struck down by motor neuron disease and passed away seventeen years ago at the relatively tender age of fifty-nine. Steve Gillette, who is no slouch when it comes to playing guitar, pays tribute to his mentor by merging two traditional tunes as *Rosmini's Rag*. Finally, this couple's love of the English and their quaint ways finds expression in Flanders & Swann's amusing zoological tale, *The Gnu*.

**Arthur Wood**

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

### Chris Cagle BACK IN THE SADDLE

Bigger Picture Music  
Group

★★★★★

*Now this is what real  
country music should  
sound like*



On a few occasions when reviewing CDs I have commented that although a particular country singer has a very good voice, they unfortunately sound too much like hundreds of others and therefore would struggle to compete with the big names, unless they can manage to get their own unique sound. Chris Cagle has that extra something that puts him ahead of the field, which is why he is already a known name in country music and deserves to be mentioned alongside greats such as Mark Chesnutt, Tracy Lawrence and

Alan Jackson, amongst others. In fact, his biggest inspiration is Garth Brooks and maybe that is where he learned to get more out of a country song, thus giving him an edge over others.

Chris definitely knows how to sing a killer country song and he opens the album—as all country albums should start—with a full throttle country rocker. *Got My Country On* was a magnificent choice for a single, blasting out of the speakers with powerful vocals supported by a driving lead guitar. The pace is slowed down for *I'll Grow My Own*, but the passion and power in his voice is just superb, giving a commanding frontline to the forceful backing of fiery fiddle and pulsating drums. The mood then gets milder on the gorgeous ballad *Something That Wild* that proves how terrific his voice is—this track also features some more fine drumming; the drummer on the album is absolutely incredible, as are all the musicians, partly the reason as to why this album is so good.

*Let There Be Cowgirls* is ideal for American country radio, followed by more delightful ballads such as the endearing, *Dance Baby Dance* about a father's love for his daughter as he watches her grow up and the tender *Southern Girl* that has Chris' easy vocals accompanied by mandolin and pedal steel. However, the track that steals the glory for me is the supercharged ballad, *Thank God She Left The Whiskey* that has Chris Cagle straining every emotion out of his heartrending vocals as the chorus escalates to emotional crescendos alongside a highly infectious melody. Songs like this are what separates the men from the boys and why Chris Cagle is up in the premier league of male country singers. Good quality country music that is genuine and true.

**David Knowles**

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

### Beth Nielsen Chapman THE MIGHTY SKY

BNC Records

★★★★☆

*Fun-filled, absorbing  
musical voyage into the  
world of astronomy from Chapman*

Summating her album releases to date, for Beth, THE MIGHTY SKY is not an unusual musical departure, simply another demonstration by this talented woman of the power of song. What's more, I have a



feeling Chapman had a great deal of fun writing the songs and recording this album. Rocky Alvey, one of Chapman's co-writers, is Director of Dyer Observatory. Owned by Nashville's Vanderbilt University, it opened in 1953. Raised on an Illinois farm, Alvey describes songwriting as a therapeutic hobby. The *Mighty Sky* began life as a poem, written whilst Rocky observed starlit nights as a child on his family's farm. Decades later, Alvey's music notebook contained a mix of full-formed and partially complete science-inspired songs as well as lyric ideas. When his friend Beth Nielsen Chapman agreed to collaborate with him on a science album, she also enlisted her long-time co-writer Annie Roboff. While working on this project, little did the participants realise how warmly the end result would be embraced by stateside educators and by NASA—before the album was released.

THE MIGHTY SKY, co-produced by Beth and Annie, is a suite of eleven astronomy themed songs and narratives and opens with the title song. A ballad, it's one of three titles that bear the credit Chapman/Alvey; the lyric in this instance, focuses on the 'hidden treasures' and 'subtle glories' of our night sky. Their *Test, Re-test & Verify*, replete with narration and lyric, relates how scientists approach the physics of the universe, whilst the closing song, *There Is No Darkness*, another ballad that solely features Beth's voice and acoustic guitar; Annie's keyboard quite beautiful in its simplicity. *Through Hubble's Eyes* is narrated by Dr. C.R. O'Dell, a Hubble Space Telescope founding scientist. Describing the orbiting telescope as a 'time machine,' the ethereal sounding keyboard backdrop was penned by Beth. Solely credited to Alvey, *The Moon* is given an a cappella doo-wop vocal treatment, whilst you can guess the musical setting of the penultimate *You Can See The Blues* on which Kyla Jade takes the vocal lead.

The names Chapman, Alvey and Roboff are appended to five songs, namely *The Big Bang Boom*—wherein the universe begins, *Little Big Song*, *Rockin' Little Neutron Star*—with the sound of a pulsar embedded in the backdrop, rhythmically it rocks and includes a narration by Dr. Jocelyn Bell Burnell who discovered them; *Zodiacal Zydeco*—employs a Louisiana roots music backdrop to deliver its message, and finally, *The Way That We Lean*. **Arthur Wood**

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