

**The Brothers Comatose**  
**SONGS FROM THE STOOP**  
Self released  
★★★★

*Frenetic and played with a lot of heart, this record is one to hunt down and listen to with pure pleasure*

This band from San Francisco seems to be the type of outfit who do not meticulously listen back over their work and tweak it until it is note perfect so no imperfections are present anywhere. This debut album was recorded live over four days, and what an exciting period that must have been as you can sense that they had a lot of fun in the studio.

Of the twelve songs, I found *Ally of the Oaks* to be the finest example. Not that the other tracks aren't awesome (in fact they are the complete opposite) it was with this song that the band demonstrated their full versatility. One song which really stands out from the others is a rendition of Mick Jagger and Keith Richards *Dead Flowers*. With an Avett Brothers groove about it, the delightful rolling banjo picking and outstanding fiddle playing are topped off by some exquisite harmonies. This tune is that good I wouldn't be surprised at all if this found itself at the top of the Americana Charts in the not too distant future.

I sure did enjoy this album. With an authentic sound and not one element of corporate tackiness in its DNA, albums like this should not go unnoticed by the general public. The more people that listen to this record the better, for songs like this should be celebrated by millions. **RH**  
[www.thebrotherscomatose.com](http://www.thebrotherscomatose.com)

**Andy Wilkinson & Andy Hedges**  
**LONG WAYS FROM HOME**  
Yellowhouse Music  
★★★★

*A travel and love-themed sophomore set by Lubbock, Texas-based duo*

Hot on the heels of last year's *WELCOME TO THE TRIBE*, the debut collaboration by Andy Wilkinson and Andy Hedges—both Lubbock, Texas-based musicians—the duo return with the eleven-song *LONG WAYS FROM HOME*. The album title appears in the lyric of the Blind Willie Johnson quasi-religious composition *Everybody Ought To Treat A Stranger Right* which launches the collection. *LONG WAYS FROM HOME* features five Wilkinson-penned originals, on which he takes the lead vocal, and the first of those, *Gideon*, is subtitled (*For Townes Van Zandt*). Set at year-end, it's raining heavily as the protagonists are Nashville-bound in a car, furthermore the lyric hints at some impending major life event.

Hedges is a tad younger than Wilkinson, yet it's the former who takes the lead vocal on the cover songs be they duo arrangements of traditional material or covers penned by a third party. One theme

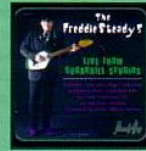


**Freddie Steady 5**  
**LIVE FROM SUGAR HILL STUDIOS**  
SteadyBoy SB-0031  
★★★★

Steady Freddie Krc returns with his Texas party band and an album that brings together strands from throughout his career. As such we've got *A Girl Like You* from his early 1980s power-pop combo the Explosives, *Treasure Of The Orient* from his Shakin' Apostles psychedelic country combo, the timeless *In My Head*, the psychedelia echoing his regular partnerships with Roky Erickson, *I Will Wait For You*, co-written with his teen pop protégé Jenny Wolfe and varied FS5 numbers. The latter include *Cavestomp 2001* which reiterates his love of mixing up Texan music and that of British 1960s beat generation bands such as the Downliners Sect.

All the numbers are united by a Tex-pop sound inspired by Krc's affection for the Sir Douglas Quintet, who recorded *She's About A Mover* at Sugar Hill in Houston, and who were the first band seen by Krc, when he was barely knee high to an armadillo. As such, there's that cheap organ sound plus lead guitar that sometimes jangles, sometimes chimes, and is sometimes blistering, courtesy of original Explosives guitarist (and co-writer of several numbers) Cam King.

Krc's astute selection of songs from his back catalogue (along with a couple of covers which show where he's coming from: Bo Diddley's *Who Do You Love?* And the Beatles' *No Reply*) creates a greatest hits feel, differing styles giving way to great tunes. Texan roots-pop at its best. **ND**  
[www.steadyboyrecords.com](http://www.steadyboyrecords.com)



common to a number of the lyrics is American's restless urge to be going. In that regard Hedges tackles the traditional *Rambler Gambler* and *Mole In The Ground*, plus Mississippi John Hurt's *Let The Mermaids Flirt With Me*, while the traditional travelogue *West Texas Blues* features additional verses written by Wilkinson. Where the arrangement of public domain material has, so far, been credited to Hedges/Wilkinson, *Boll Weevil*, Hedges' final selection, is simply credited 'traditional'.

Andy W's *Tabasco* portrays lovers that have gone their separate ways, while the gently paced *Tell Me How*, co-penned by Wilkinson and Amanda Shires—Lubbock's latest rising star—explores love's possibilities. While there are a few indications that the couple in *Centerline*—she's asleep: 'in the shotgun seat'—are travelling musicians, the narrator also hints at some undefined personal tension. As for album closer *A Home For Me*, it's constructed around the repeated: 'Silence is a prison with no lock and key. Somewhere there's a home for me.'

The two Andy's (lead/support vocal, guitar) are supported throughout this acoustic (sounding) collection by the sweet vocal harmonies of Alissa Hedges, Curtis Peoples plays electric bass on *Tell Me How*, while cowboy songwriter-performer Don Edwards and his six string banjo guest on *Boll Weevil*. **AW**  
<http://www.andywilkinson.net/>

**Gráda**  
**NATURAL ANGLE**  
Compass Records 7  
4528 2  
★★★★

*A pleasant mix of mainly Celtic music and song*

Although founded in 2001, Gráda is a new name to me and, after several failed attempts, I eventually found time to listen to this album at one sitting. I have been pleasantly surprised by most



of the content. However, I would have to say that, as my taste goes these days, there is a bit of the curate's egg about it. The band, with its curious mix of Irish and New Zealand membership, would appear to have many influences given the treatment on several of the tracks, most notably Mississippi John Hurt's *Louis Collins*, with its distinct Celtic overhaul, losing its bluesy origins along the way. While the traditional ballad, *Butcher Boy*, has also been given a more upbeat 21st century makeover. Personally, despite the intrinsically beautiful tones of Nicola Joyce on the latter, I still prefer the more traditional, slower delivery with the accompanying pathos. I'm a real sucker for sad songs. For me anyway, the quicker tempo would appear to remove the original sympathy the writer intended the listener to feel for the plight of the song's unfortunate subject. On the plus side, I do like Tim O'Brien's production as well as his vocal and musical interventions. In addition to the mournful variety, I am also a big fan of story songs and on the excellent, Tim O'Brien-penned, *John Riley*, Nicola Joyce gives a great performance of the tale of one Irishman's famine-enforced emigration to the US; his eventual enlistment into the San Patricio, a mainly Irish brigade of ex-US Army soldiers who changed sides to fight for Mexico during the Mexican-American war of the mid-1800s. At the end of the war, treated as deserters by their American conquerors, the survivors of the San Patricio brigade were executed. It's a great story and, just by coincidence, the brigade is the subject of the Chieftain's latest album, *SAN PATRICIO*, in collaboration with Ry Cooder. I would buy this album for the *John Riley* track alone, along with the beautiful *No Linen No Lace*, on which Nicola Joyce again excels. The featured instrumentals are also excellent toe-tappers and a definite bonus, especially the

opening number, *Abe's Axe*, recalling those halcyon days of the 1970s and Horslips, and the wonderfully titled *Salthill Bugalú*, I get the feeling that this band would be well worth seeing in a live performance. I would like to hear their previous output.

Overall, this is a very good album, well worth a few pounds of anyone's cash. **CMcL**  
[www.gradamusic.com](http://www.gradamusic.com)

**Great American Taxi**  
**RECKLESS HABITS**  
Thirty Tigers 09  
★★★★

*A throwback to 1970s country-rock, or a Jam Band?!*



This could so easily have been a great album, instead of which, it is merely pretty good. It's slightly disappointing that musicians of this quality seem to have hedged their bets by playing predominately 1970s country-rock but throwing a couple of New Orleans-type funky tracks, a couple of Little Feat-sounding tracks and a little Grateful Dead into the mix, almost to show what great musicians they are, instead of simply producing a great album. This was totally unnecessary. Although the country-rock is mainly rooted in the styles of mid-1970s bands such as Flying Burrito Brothers and New Riders of the Purple Sage, it is not of the same songwriting quality as the early lineups of these two bands, particularly the Gram Parsons and Chris Hillman-led Burittos. They lack the soul and songwriting skills of the former although the musicianship is raised to a different level. Everything about the album is decent but nothing is great. Certainly the country-rock does sound authentic and the harmonies are excellent, but the title track probably sums the album up in as much as it is a tribute to early pioneer, Parsons, and goes totally over the top with its telling of his story. The fairly flat, toneless vocals seem to be due to an inability to come up with a melody that could carry the lyrics and this can be added to the songs that nearly, but not quite, work. For me the highlight by some distance is Jeff Tweedy's *New Madrid* with strong vocals, terrific harmonies and excellent instrumentation. There is nothing bad on the whole album but very little that is as good as this, although *American Beauty*, *Albuquerque* and the instrumental *Big Sandy River* provide strong moments.

To call them a Jam Band feels to me to be a cop-out, this title seeming, as it does, to cover a multitude of styles, but equally as importantly 'improvisation.' It would be interesting and no doubt entertaining to hear this album played live; maybe the musicians do improvise around the songs, certainly they are good enough. Perhaps, as with the Grateful Dead, they will be a band whose albums never quite catch their live quality, but I for one hope not and look forward to hearing their next studio offering. **MM**  
[www.greatamericantaxi.com](http://www.greatamericantaxi.com)