

seventh album, it is not difficult to appreciate why Jaime Michaels has built up a loyal following. There is nothing harsh or abrasive about his voice; on the contrary, there is a smoothness and warmth in the way in which he delivers his songs which is very appealing. As a writer Michaels is poetic, using interesting imagery. For the most part his lyrics are non controversial and he avoids writing about dimly lit bars, drowning one's sorrows in booze, cheating and many of the accepted ingredients considered to be essential in so many country songs. His avoidance of these subjects, however, does not mean that his lyrics are bland or insipid. In *A Momentary Thing* he gives us snapshots of his progress through life, from the acceptance of the expectations of adults during boyhood, through to his search for freedom as a teenager and then his own acceptance of the ways of the world in adulthood. He recalls his boyhood again on *Red Western Flyer*, a rusty old bike which he named Delores—which he treasured. Many years later, in adulthood, he sees a brand new Delores in a shop window and cannot resist buying it and reliving his boyhood adventures. The theme of boyhood is revisited in *Surrender*, as Michaels recalls the dreariness of the small town in which he grew up, but even here, his depiction of the town is absorbingly vivid. He turns to four other writers for material, Chad Elliott for *Minnesota*, Amelia Spicer for *Shine*, David Glaser, who contributed *Concrete River*, a road song and *Gravedigger's Boy*, an interesting portrait of a young man who, because of his trade, is largely avoided by everyone.

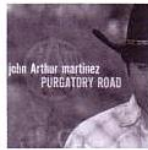
Another aspect of this recording which holds a lot of appeal lies in the instrumentation. Michaels plays acoustic guitar and he is joined on some tracks by Andrew Hardin whose subtle playing is highly commendable. Michaels also favours the accordion and this features prominently on a number of tracks, played mainly by Joel Guzman while Chris Gage takes over the instrument on the title track. The banjo plays a major role on the droll *Me And The Cat*, with the tin whistle coming to the fore on *Red Western Flyer*. Also featured on some tracks are mandolin, upright bass and percussion; but producer, Jono Manson has ensured that the instrumentation always acts as a vehicle for Michael's voice and at no point does it swamp it. Also worthy of a special mention is Larkin Gayl whose harmony vocals go a long way in enhancing those of Michaels.

In summary, a pleasing collection of original songs by an artist with a warm, gentle voice, and a handful of highly proficient musicians, which should appeal to those who are weary of being bludgeoned with the formulaic mainstream music to which they are subjected by DJs who, in all likelihood, would not consider including Jaime Michaels' style in their mix of music. **LK** www.jaimemichaels.com

**John Arthur Martinez**  
**PURGATORY ROAD**  
Apache Ranch Records-ARR1748  
★★★★

*A voice that takes you back to the country crooners of the 1960s*

Texas resident John Arthur Martinez came second ahead of Miranda Lambert on American TV's Nashville Star in 2003, and he also co-wrote *Seguro Que Hell Yes* on Flaco Jimenez's self-titled 1994 album that went on to win a Grammy. His silky smooth and very rich voice is just a pleasure to listen to, whether singing the pulsating *Purgatory Road* with driving guitar solos alongside fiddle and powerful backing vocals that would not have sounded out of place on a Garth Brooks album, or the gorgeous *Que No Puede Ver* (the one who got away) on which he alternates between English and Spanish his voice is just so relaxing. Make yourself a large Latte, put this CD in your player, sit back in your chair and just relax. **DK** www.johnarthurmartinez.net



**Jon Sinnott**  
**GIVING UP THE GHOST**  
Self released  
★★★★

*Very good album release from this promising young singer-songwriter*

Bristol based Jon Sinnott impressed me when I saw him as a support act to the mighty Band Of Heathens in Bedford, and I am also highly impressed with his new self-released CD. The album starts with the musically very catchy and quite upbeat *Arm n Arm* on which Jon's quite infectious vocals are supported by some punchy piano notes from Dan Moore. He also proves his vocal class on the lyrically quite sad *Giving Up The Ghost* on which the tempo increases to a quite exciting finale.

Jon has a very easy and smooth vocal style that makes his music very palatable. His unique style of Americana mixes alt.country and folk with a pop foundation that would make most of his music easily crossover-able to the pop radio stations, and could be played quite comfortably alongside artists such as James Morrison, although the quite exceptional track *The Wheel* that closes the CD out had me thinking more of a young Bob Dylan. This album is a terrific introduction to a very talented young singer-songwriter from the UK. **DK** www.myspace.com/jonsinnott



**Maggie Reilly**  
**LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD**  
Red Berry Records-RBR0006  
★★★★☆

*Fine collection of re-recordings by one of Scotland's finest singers*

Maggie Reilly first came to prominence as a member of the band



Cado Belle in the 1970s, but it was her musical involvement with Mike Oldfield in the 1980s and especially the hit single *Moonlight Shadow* that catapulted her name into the limelight. That song is featured on this album and again highlights her sweet and pure voice on this gorgeous tune. Other Oldfield tracks included are the jaunty *To France* and the forceful *Family Man* that Reilly also had a hand in as a co-writer.

The wonderful *Lilith* shows off Maggie's powerful but at times haunting vocals perfectly, and she co-wrote this with her musical partner of over 30 years Stuart MacKillop who plays some fine piano and keyboards throughout the album. *Lilith* also includes a fine guitar solo from Hugh Burns that sees the song out. *True Colours* came over a little weak, but then I have never heard a version that has been able to top the excellent hit version by the wonderfully colourful Cyndi Lauper. That aside, this is a very good album. **DK** www.maggiereilly.co.uk

**Michael Jerling**  
**MUSIC HERE TONIGHT**  
Fool's Hill Music  
★★★★

*Talented Saratoga Springs singer-songwriter reprises highlights from his catalogue at Caffé Lena*

The sub-title of this album is LIVE AT CAFE LENA. If you are well-versed in the geography of folk listening rooms Stateside, you'll be well aware that Caffé Lena, America's oldest continuously operating folk coffeehouse, is located in the upstate New York city of Saratoga Springs. It was founded in 1960 by



the late Lena Spencer (who died in 1989). The Springs has been home to Illinois born Jerling for a couple of decades. In the early 1980s, based in New York City, Michael performed in Greenwich Village clubs and was part of the Fast Folk co-operative. Early the following decade, along with Richard Shindell, Jerling was one of the New Voices, New Visions quartet of folk performers signed by Shanachie Records. In 1993 Jerling won Kerrville's New Folk Songwriting contest.

In a recording career spanning three decades and eight previous releases, MUSIC HERE TONIGHT is his first live album. Recorded at Caffé Lena on June 30 this year, Michael is supported by his decades long collaborator/co-producer Tony Markellis (fretless acoustic bass, harmony vocals) and Mrs. Jerling—Teresina Huxtable (reed organ, accordion, percussion, harmony vocal). *Wide Awake In Parsippany* is the humorous recollection of a bad New Jersey motel experience. Equally rib-tickling is the later, slyly worded offering *In The Middle Ages*—'If you need a vacation go on a crusade' and 'Healthcare was holistic, the food was organic, A few little maggots didn't cause a panic.' Where the latter lyric reinterprets historical fact, in the ensuing *Old Stones* a citizen of the New World visits the Old World and observes its ancient buildings and young women 'Dressed up like their favourite pop stars.'

Built around an up-tempo rockabilly rhythm, *Jimmy & Jerry Lee* focuses on the real life 'Son of the devil, Son of the Lord.' As well as accompanying his voice with six and twelve-string guitar, Michael is also an adept mandolin picker. Supporting his vocal with the latter instrument, *Old Henry's House* recalls

**Chris Jones & the Night Drivers**  
**CLOUD OF DUST**  
GSM Records 102  
★★★★

*Jones sings with a solid country twang while his songs are splashed with rootsy country and bluegrass music*

Best known for his work in the bluegrass world, Chris Jones has garnered attention for his distinctive voice and insightful songwriting, which supersedes the traditional bluegrass genre. As a solo artist, Chris was signed to California's Little Dog Records, and worked with country-rock producer Pete Anderson. Now for the first time in several years he is back working with a full bluegrass band and the result is this stunning album that has both stirring originals, superb picking and vibrant, powerful singing from Jones, whose compositions reveal one foot in traditional country and the other in traditional bluegrass.

The Night Drivers—Ned Luberecki (banjo, harmony vocals), Jon Weisberger (bass, harmony vocals), Mark Stoffel (mandolin) and Aaron Till (fiddle, harmony vocals)—are augmented by guests Darrin Vincent, Sally Jones, Jeremy Garrett, Mike Witcher, Megan Lynch and Shawn Lane. Highlights are many, but include the heartbreaking *Cold Lonesome Night* which features embellishments of fiddle, mandolin and Dobro, *Come On Little Children*, bolstered by beautiful gospel harmonies, and a neat rendition of Johnny Duncan's *I'd Rather Love You*, which Charley Pride took to the top of the country charts in 1971. There are also a couple of bonus tracks—*Cowboys Ain't Supposed To Cry* and *Pretty Saro*—recorded several year ago for Rebel Records but currently unavailable. The former features Ron Block, Rob Ickes, Dan Tyminski, Sally Jones and Darrin Vincent, whilst *Pretty Saro* has just Tim O'Brien's plaintive fiddle.

Chris Jones possesses something that money can't buy. It is the ability to sing a song and make you have a reaction. For me that reaction is most often chills. He has a soulfulness that is unbelievable. Seek this out—you will not be disappointed. **AC** www.chrisjonesmusic.com





## ...the new releases

### Phil Ochs, James Taylor & Joni Mitchell

#### AMCHITKA

Greenpeace Records

★★★★☆

Historic 1970 benefit concert by three folk music legends that led to the founding of Greenpeace.

The full title of this two-disc, twenty-seven song, live recording is AMCHITKA, THE 1970 CONCERT THAT LAUNCHED GREENPEACE. The concert date was October 16, 1970, the location Pacific Coliseum in Vancouver, British Columbia. Sold exclusively via Greenpeace, this release will only be available for three years. Disturbed at the American Atomic Energy Commission's nuclear weapon testing programme on the Aleutian island of Amchitka—located between Alaska and Russia—the late Irving Stowe, co-founder of Greenpeace, formed its precursor the Don't Make A Wave Committee. Helmed by Stowe, that committee organised the Amchitka concert—tickets cost \$3 each—which raised the \$18K needed to charter Phyllis Cormack a halibut trawler—renamed Green Peace—to sail to Amchitka and block the testing. When it finally sailed almost a year later, Green Peace was intercepted by US Coastguards and turned back. Although the scheduled test on November 6, 1971 went ahead, three months later the testing programme was cancelled.

Terry David Mulligan, a dj on radio station CKVN was compere that evening. As Disc 1 opens he introduces Stowe, who thanks the audience for their support of the 'first Greenpeace project.' Early on the morning of the concert due to the kidnapping of dignitaries, by the Québec separatist movement FLQ, Prime Minister Trudeau had invoked the War Measures Act, hence Ochs' comment 'not everyday you get to play in a police state' while introducing *Rhythms Of Revolution* (aka *Ringin' Of Revolution*). In February that year Ochs released *GREATEST HITS* his fourth A&M recording. From that release his set included *Chords Of Fame* and closed with *No More Songs*, while, obviously noting Canada's turmoil, Phil's set leans heavily on the political songs that appeared on his three Elektra albums.

James Taylor's three times Platinum seller *SWEET BABY JAMES* was also released during February 1970 and from that collection he performs *Fire And Rain*, *Blossom* and the title song. He also previews *Riding On A Railroad* and *You Can Close Your Eyes* from the then, forthcoming *MUD SLIDE SLIM AND THE BLUE HORIZON*. Introduced by a departing Taylor, during her set Mitchell supports her voice with acoustic guitar, piano or dulcimer. Drawing material from her, then, total catalogue of three albums, the Saskatoon songbird stumbles, then recovers, during a rendition of *For Free*. The rarity in her set is a performance of *Hunter aka The Good Samaritan*, a song destined for *BLUE* but consigned at the last minute to the record label's deepest vault. From the classic, yet-to-be-released *BLUE*, Mitchell premieres *My Old Man*, *Carey* and *A Case Of You*. Carey merges with a rendition of Dylan's *Mr. Tambourine Man* and partway through the latter song Joni invites James to help her complete the song. The concert, and Disc 2, closes with Mitchell's *The Circle Game*, although, curiously, the song fades before the performance is complete.

The discs are housed in a 48 page book that features black and white photographs from the concert and the maiden voyage of Green Peace. Back then, we were all younger than yesterday. Ochs was aged 29, Taylor 22 and Joni 26. As this release attests, it was an era when great songs appeared legion. **AW**  
http://www.amchitka-concert.com/  
http://www.myspace.com/amchitka



live performer, it is easy to imagine that Murrumbidgee Jones oozes old school, but his grumbling doesn't convert well to the recorded form. There are moments where he dazzles, but on the whole the collection really is THE SAME JOKE TWICE. **JW**  
www.murrumbidgeejones.com

### Al Stewart

#### UNCORKED

Wallaby Trails

Recordings

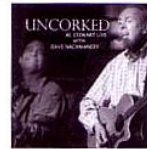
★★★★☆

Al Stewart

live recording

featuring lead

guitarist Dave Nachmanoff



If you're familiar with the fact that Stewart is an acknowledged wine connoisseur and collector, and recall his nectar of the grape themed song collection *DOWN IN THE CELLAR* (2000), then you'll appreciate the title of this live recording. The full title is *UNCORKED—AL STEWART LIVE WITH DAVE NACHMANOFF* and is available via numerous download sites and can be purchased in CD form via Nachmanoff's web site.

If you're familiar with Stewart's lyrical canon you'll be well aware of his penchant for lyrically embracing historic events and characters. *UNCORKED* opens with a seven-minute plus segue of *Last Days Of The Century* from the 1988 album of the same name, and *Constantinople* from the earlier *24 CARROTS* (1980). Controversy and possible corruption surrounding the American presidency is nothing new, evidenced by *WARREN HARDING*, who held the post from 1921 until his death from a heart attack two years later. A submariner's life is the focus in *Life In Dark Waters*, and the disc closes with an almost six-minute rendition of *Old Admirals* another briny themed tale. Tagged on to the end of the latter is Al's recollection of moving to New York with the aim of 'becoming a star,' and how he ended up being a roadie for Simon & Garfunkel.

Stewart subjectively shifts focus with the recollection of losing a lover in the older song *News From Spain*—originally released only on 7 inch single—and follows with the even earlier *Bedsitter Images*, a recollection of life in late 1960s London. In *Auctioning Dave*, one of Al's between song interludes, he amuses the audience with a tale of taking Dave for the night, including the Meridian, Mississippi elderly, oil widow who returned him 'clothing in tatters and absolutely covered in oil.' Nachmanoff's tasteful contributions on lead guitar are up front throughout this collection, allied to his occasional background vocal. **AW**  
www.alstewart.com

### Owen Harvey

#### DISAPP-EARING

#### STRANGERS

Self Release

★★★★

A album you will

find most difficult

not to be drawn too



Joined by a whole family of Adeys and in particular Russ on guitar/mandolin, James on bass and Dave

the aftermath when an acquaintance passes on. Subsequent highlights include the rural rod and line holiday retreat *Fishtrap Lake*, the equine and more themed *Why They Run The Race*, plus *Doubter's Prayer* Michael's heartfelt snapshot of life. In the penultimate *Music Here Tonight*, the only previously unrecorded song, Jerling pays tribute to Spencer's legacy and the venue she founded.

Exclusively featuring self-penned songs written as long ago as 1975, if you're unfamiliar with Jerling's storytelling musical canon, this eighteen song/twenty track collection is a truly fine primer. Once heard, I'm certain that you'll dig deeper into this talented songwriter's still in-print back catalogue. **AW**  
http://www.michaeljerling.com/

### Michael K Burke and the Honky-tonk Witch doctors

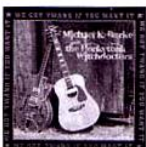
#### WE GOT TWANG IF YOU WANT IT

Okiefornia Music 25652

★★★★

Effortlessly pleasing collection of country, rockabilly, honky-tonk and gospel

Los Angeles raised Michael K Burke has been a closet singer-songwriter for the past forty-odd years, singing and writing in his living room whilst he raised a family. He grew up on a diet of honky-tonk, western swing, rockabilly and West Coast country-rock. All those influences can be heard on this truly triumphant debut album. Apart from a gospel medley—*Swing Low, Amazing Grace, When The Saints*—all songs are self-penned on



this lively and joyful celebration of his own unique musical genre in an age of drill-down specialisation. By throwing piano, organ, harmonica, mandolin, steel guitar, Dobro, trumpet, bass, and drums into the mix, Burke has created a collection of country-inspired gems that you will not soon tire of.

*Talkin' Fun, Talkin' Love* is a lively, light-hearted bopper featuring delightful stuttering guitar and a snappy, rapid-fire lyric. Most definitely playable. The autobiographical *I Hear 'Em Still* recalls those heady days in the 1950s when young Michael would watch the Town Hall Party on TV. Its solid arrangement, true-to-life lyric, great vocal and styling is impressive and ready for the traditionalists out there. *I'm Going To Bard California* is more in the Jimmie Rodgers style, with blue yodels and all, whilst *Could You?* is quick-step shuffle and his *I'm Hell Bent For Scootchen* will get ya movin', love Darren Consula's tight upright bass track and Kathy Barwick's banjo blends with John Kocinsky's Telecaster perfectly. Throughout the overall band sound has good drive and fans of traditional country should definitely look into Michael K Burke. **AC**  
www.myspace.com/michaelkennethburke

### Murrumbidgee Jones

#### THE SAME

#### JOKE TWICE

Gecko Records

GECKO 003

★★★★

Australian

country...the old

style...



Murrumbidgee Jones is the project of Sydney-based poet, painter, storyteller and singer-songwriter Warwick Irwin alongside a handful of talented musician friends. Irwin calls on old country storytelling as the inspiration for this album—with a smoke-driven drawl, he focuses on comical tales and wistful memories set to a moaning Dobro and banjo. There is something appealing in the traditional approach of the Australian performance poet. The naturalness of his drawl is inviting but not enticing. *THE SAME JOKE TWICE* suffers from similarity, mainly in the vocal delivery. Irwin attempts humorous tales, but the jokes are lost in his at times incomprehensible drone. Whilst the musical setting is innovatively welcoming, the lyrical genius is easily lost.

Whilst *Wrong Way Home* bleats out the stereo just close your eyes and imagine a typical old man's pub. In the corner, sat with a few of his friends is Murrumbidgee Jones turning out the tunes to the rest of his friends. In a simple setting, *THE SAME JOKE TWICE* would work. The charm of the ageing performer has appeal and a clear target audience, but on record the charisma of the old man in the corner is instantly lost.

There are times when the music shines so bright that the groan enhances. *From An Austin A90* shimmers amongst the dull fade. A harmonica driven blues number, Irwin suddenly finds the vocal drive of Seaside Steve to compliment his musicians. *Never Say Never* with its battling violin, mandolin and harmonica accompanying a heartfelt lament is equally pleasing to the ear. This album has its limitations. As a