

story goes that, individually, the Johns pursued the sisters with a view to taking them into the studio. The writing credits are shared jointly by the sisters—Emily (vocals, whistling), Jessica (vocals, acoustic and electric guitar, organ, vibraphone) and Camilla Staveley-Taylor (vocals, ukulele)—apart from *Gone Tomorrow* where Tom Billington's name is appended. Early incarnations of half of the DEAD & BORN & GROWN songs, including the co-write, appeared on the aforementioned EPs, while the rear of the liner booklet bears the credit: 'To Mum & Dad, for teaching us harmonies and how to go wisely and slow.' Vocal harmonies are where the sisters excel, and they replicate onstage what they achieved in the studio; more so, actually.

DEAD & BORN & GROWN begins with an a cappella rendition of the four-verse *Wisely & Slowly*, in the process delivering snapshots related to human interaction, and closing with the touchstone 'Troubles in tow, go wisely and slow.' The foregoing vocal cycle is repeated with organ accompaniment, followed by a drums and handclaps supported reprise of the opening verse. Subjectively their lyrics relate, in the main, to the often emotion filled boy/girl conundrum. 'I can't be married' is the retort one man receives in *The Long Run*, while *Snow* finds another dismissed as 'a little child' to which is added the resolute 'I will never belong to anyone.' As for the equally seasonal and mostly up-tempo *Winter Trees*, the events of a traumatic November night are recalled therein.

Marginally changing tack, *Pay Us No Mind* is a feminist manifesto complete with the F-word. The opening verse of *Tongue Behind My Teeth* hints at unease, if not restrained venom—'Patience is a virtue and mine with you is wearing thin'—that's further confirmed by the subsequent and repeated 'And I know it would do no good, but I'd hurt you if I could.' Following the closing number *Eagle Song*, a one-hundred second long hidden song surfaces. Thankfully the Johns stripped down production approach allows the three voices to 'do the singing,' including renditions of the already familiar *Gone Tomorrow*, *The Motherlode* and *Facing West*.

The Staves—imagine The Roches reincarnated, without the quirky lyrical edge. Their take on folk-rock isn't born of time-served adherence to tradition; rather it's a 21st century recall of the 1970s Laurel Canyon ethos—thanks to their parent's

record collection—merged, of course, with typical English restraint. Lyrically there are hints of subtlety, sadly no great intellectual depth (in time that may come), and certainly no conventional beginning—middle—end storytelling. While the latter would have enhanced the end result, darn they sound good, addictively so.

**Arthur Wood**

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

## Wayne Hancock RIDE

Bloodshot

★★★★

*That rarest of 21st century country albums: it's full of genuine retro country music*

Wayne 'the Train' Hancock doesn't like his music being referred to as 'retro.' Well, I'm sorry Mr. Hancock, but with my 45 years of experience in writing about music, to me there's only one way to describe the music on *RIDE*, and that is 'retro.' It's nothing to be embarrassed or ashamed about, but the fact is if you're 'fat' then you're 'fat,' if you're 'thin' then you're 'thin; and if you're 'retro' then swallow your pride and accept it. The ghost of Hank Williams hangs heavily over many of these tracks, but also you'll hear echoes of Chuck Berry, Ernest Tubb and even ol' Jimmie Rodgers. In fact, there's nothing here that I haven't heard a thousand times before. Some of the up-tempo numbers too often sound like honky-tonk retreads, but as he proves with *Best To Be Alone* he can deliver a sad-titled ballad like few others, even it does sound like a long-lost Hank Sr. nugget. That is maybe the major drawback with Wayne 'the Train' and *RIDE*. I kept being distracted as his influences flashed across my mind, like the Chuck Berry guitar lines that drive across the opening *Ride*. Visions of ol' Chuck duck-walking across the stage wouldn't disappear. Then came Ernest Tubb walking the floor with his deep Texas drawl in *Fair Weather Blues*.

The rest of the CD features varied textures, with the mainstream country swing of *Home With My Baby*, the subdued rockabilly beat of *Cappuccino Boogie* and the Hank-styled *Lone Road Home* on which electric guitar playing is exemplary. The Austin-based singer is entirely convincing throughout. Production by Lloyd Maines is clean and perfectly captures the essence of yesteryear's country music with a

modern sheen that makes retro perfectly acceptable in 2013. **Alan Cackett**

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

## Buddy Mondlock THE MEMORY WALL

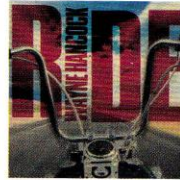
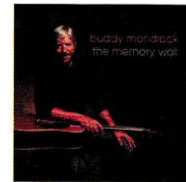
Sparkling Gap Music

★★★★☆

*Buddy's subtle strategy is to allow five years between albums. Result, they're peppered with quality fare*

On his latest musical outing, Mondlock's fifth, this Nashville-based son of Illinois is supported by Kenny Malone (drums, percussion), Dan Dugmore (pedal steel, Dobro, lap steel), Stuart Duncan (violin, mandolin, mandocello) plus, his school pal and regular touring companion Mike Lindauer (bass), while vocal harmonies are supplied by singer-songwriters Celeste Krenz and Melissa Greener. Mondlock's name is appended as composer to the 13 songs, half-a-dozen being co-writes. The opening opus *The Ugly One* is one of the latter; a collaboration with Galway-based musician-songwriter Parisch Browne—and it's a gem. References to the Native American world pervade the lyric, voiced by *The Ugly One* who is 'strangely formed' and spends his tribal life 'outside the fire.' That said; we learn of his numerous talents, mystical, artistic and medicinal, and how his legacy will be imprinted 'on the memory wall.' Guy Clark spotted Buddy's undoubted songwriting talent during a 1986 Kerrville Folk Festival Ballad Tree, and advised the young musician to move to Nashville. Guy's roles of staunch supporter and mentor gave way in time to co-writing partner. Their *The Holes You Leave* is chock full of wisdom, and jaw dropping lines—'All the news that's fit to fool you' which references a bundle of old newspapers, being a prime example.

*Some Kind Of Hope*, *Crooked Scars* written with English musician Richard Evans, *The Disappearing Girl* and *Let Me Go* trace the rise and fall of relationships, while the narrator in *Stone In My Pocket* hurtles 'through the modern age' on the interstate near Mount Shasta and yearns for a precious person 2000 miles away. Buddy's banjo and Stuart Duncan's violin imbue the latter melody with a folk feel. *A Canary's Song* was co-penned during the late 1980s when Buddy and Garth Brooks were the





## NEW RELEASES

first writers signed to Bob Doyle's Major Bob Music. Featuring Krenz's sole vocal contribution, therein a former miner strives for a better life.

Written with Amherst, Massachusetts-based musician Richard Berman, the lonely *Quoddy Point* lighthouse keeper enjoys a clear 360 degree view to the horizon while reflecting upon the bumps he's experienced in his life. 'Thought I had it all figured out' is the central character's summation of his existence in *What Do I Know*, and it's followed by the equally rich character portrait *Lost In Space*. Solely featuring Mondlock's voice and finger-picked acoustic guitar, *Central Park* slyly quotes a line from the 1948 Nat King Cole hit *Nature Boy*. Buddy and his late father Bob (d. 3/2011) wrote the song, and therein a wide-eyed 19-year-old recalls a brush with love. A happy-go-lucky up-tempo delight, album closer *Stay Up All Night* finds a couple observe the celestial delights of the night-time sky. Repeated instances of magic woven by word and melody are what constitute a great album, and from the outset to the final dying note Mondlock's THE MEMORY WALL shines. **Arthur Wood**

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

### Charlie Winston RUNNING STILL

Real World Records:

ATEDC039DIGI

★★★★

*Twelve musically  
colourful canvases*

*from British singer-songwriter Charlie  
Winston*



Following the chart-topping success of his number one follow-up album *Hobo* in 2009, Cornish-born, France-based singer-songwriter Charlie Winston returns (along with the Oxymorons band) with his eclectically composed third release, *RUNNING STILL* which has already proven to be a success across the Channel. Consisting of twelve very different (*Speak To Me* and *Rockin' In The Suburbs* are probably two of the album's more abstract efforts), yet thoughtfully produced indie-folk-fused tracks—none of which would be half as good if it weren't for his distinct vocal delivery—Charlie shows he has a creative ear for making beautiful music.

*Hello Alone* opens the album on a perfect indie note, with lyrics about being alone with yourself, whilst the epic plea of *Where Can I Buy Happiness?* provides a

passionately-sung, musical gem. *She Went Quietly*, *Unlike Me* and *Making Yourself Lonely* all follow in the footsteps of the musically beautiful; the former a heart-rendering ballad about a loved one leaving unexpectedly (in the end she returns to utter an apology), whilst the latter—an at times musically epic tale of pushing away love and the lover desperately trying to make her see sense—is an utter gem of a song. *Until You're Satisfied* has an infectious arrangement, with a memorable chorus to match, as has the blues and garage-rock-driven *Wild Ones* and the diversely mixed penultimate track, *Summertime Here All Year*. Truly the artist, Charlie writes colourful music in much the same way as an artist paints beautiful art, and although I was a fan of the single *Hobo*, it's debatable as to whether or not *RUNNING STILL* is his finest canvas yet, and it comes thoroughly recommended. **Emily Saxton**

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

### Chris Daniels BETTER DAYS

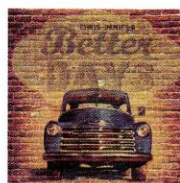
Self-released

★★★★

*A delightful surprise*

I became aware of Chris Daniels only a few short years ago when I was sent an album by Chris Daniels & the Kings and was suitably impressed. To be honest I never gave Chris or his music a second thought, and certainly didn't know much about his lengthy career in music that stretches way back to the early 1970s. *BETTER DAYS* is his first solo album in around 30 years and throws a different light on Chris and his music than I was expecting. Initially I placed it in my review pile and just left it there for at least a month before I played it. One quick play through and I loved it, but I decided I needed more time to 'really listen' before I sat down to review. So then another few weeks slipped by as I listened to and reviewed more 'high profile' releases. Finally guilty conscience caught up with me and I knew I just had to put a few hours aside to listen and review this album ... time for dithering was at an end.

Daniels has created a rich and lasting collection that starts with a story and ends after a journey ... a journey that kind of takes us through his life, without in any way being autobiographical. His compositions, which account for most of the album's material, are nicely executed blends of



country, folk, soft-rock, string band music and more, and both the picking and the singing are top-shelf. That shouldn't come as no surprise with such guest singers and musicians as Richie Furay, Sam Bush, Lloyd Maines, Mollie O'Brien, Tim Goodman, Hazel Miller, Ernie Martinez and Greg Garrison being involved. At the time of this recording Chris had been diagnosed with leukaemia ... that was two years ago and he's still out touring with the Kings, so it must be assumed that he's in remission. It would be easy for me to say that his illness has played a role in some of the reflective nature of some of these songs, but that's not the case as *Eldorado Canyon*, with the lines: 'When the snow falls in Eldorado Canyon, I'm so glad to be alive' was penned in 1971. Not all the songs are of that vintage, though; some like *Medical Marijuana*, the rockin' *Wildcat* and the gorgeous *Rose Coloured Glasses* were written specifically for this album. The latter features ethereal harmonies by Richie Furay and a wondrous acoustic musical backdrop. There's an astonishing mix of faith and foolhardy bravado in *Better Days*, a love for the old family home in *South Carolina* and bluegrass ramble through the infectious *Cabin Fever*. A pastiche of prickling banjo, mandolin and Dobro, Chris and harmony vocalists Ernie Martinez and Mary Huckins coast over these grooves with upbeat vocals that pound their good-time message home. Throughout the album his vocals complement the laid back lyrics which bring out interesting melodies with down-home Southern qualities. The whole thing comes in a hard-back booklet with lyrics to the songs, musician credits, photos and a bonus live CD recorded at Telluride in 1985 plus a Christmas song dedicated to his granddaughter. One that grows and grows the more you take the time to listen ... but don't keep putting it off the way I did.

**Alan Cackett**

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

### Chris Vallillo THE LAST DAY OF WINTER

Gin Ridge Music

★★★★

*Four mighty fine  
Vallillo songs*

*merge with nine*

*instrumentals, originals and covers, on his  
sonically accomplished sixth solo outing*

*By way of charting life in the Midwest,*

