

## NEW RELEASES

### Florence Joelle STEALING FLOWERS

Zoltan Zol 005

★★★★

*The sound of the  
1950s brought right  
up to date*



Jazzy licks mingle with pedal steel and smoochy night club vocals are backed by rumbling drums on this, the second album by Paris-born Londoner Joelle. The music has its feet in the sounds of Europe many decades ago and yet has the sharp, edgy feel of the London of today. Joelle sings with a cross-channel mystique and plays a neat, bluesy harp and is backed by the band that made her debut set, KISS OF FIRE, so entrancing and who make her live shows spellbinding.

Listen to the dark, brooding *The God Of Things*, where guitarist Paul Seacroft manages to conjure up images of both Django Reinhardt and Link Wray, or the adventurous cover of Duke Ellington's *Caravan*, where the vintage-sounding pedal steel is quite breathtaking. Throughout there's a snappy beat, percussion rather than drums, from ex-Gallon Drunk Arthur Lager. The result is a timeless mix of sounds, whether the cover of Louis Jordan's *Is You Is Or Is You Ain't My Baby*, the bluesy rockabilly of *29 Bus Blues* or the *Asleep At The Wheel* hints of the self-penned *Darkest Before Dawn*. Exceptional—and the sort of colourful cross-pollination that you could expect to see on *Later With Jools*. **Nick Dalton**

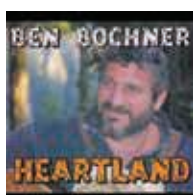
[www.florencejoelle.com](http://www.florencejoelle.com)

### Ben Bochner HEARTLAND

No Label

★★★★

*Bochner's  
HEARTLAND  
contains songs you  
need to embrace with your mind and soul*



Raised in Chicago, a long-time Oregon resident, currently Austin, Texas based, Bochner was one of the New Folk Song finalists at this year's Kerrville Folk Festival. Some two decades ago he co-authored the novel *Caverns* with the late Ken Kesey (yes, the counter-culture icon) and others. The following sentence appears on Ben's web site: 'We're closer to our lovely little gadgets than we are to our loved ones.' However unpalatable, Bochner verbalises a truth! His finger points directly at the

major worldwide 21<sup>st</sup> century malaise.

Running for 70 minutes plus, *HEARTLAND* contains 13 songs composed by Bochner since the dawn of the new millennium. They're delivered by Ben's voice—lead and support—and acoustic guitar and not much else, with every song exceeding four minutes and 20seconds duration, apart from *Still Small Voice*. Opening with *Heartland*, a remembrance of surviving harsh Midwest's winters, it's followed by the talking blues *Still Small Voice* which, toward the outset, recalls: '...the gods would speak, And the people would hear.' *The Ballad Of Johnny Walker* traces the life of the now incarcerated United States citizen/Mujahideen convert, John Phillip Walker Lindh. *Nomad's Song* and the later *Midnight To Midnight* are songs for, and about, the road, *Her Hands* being a remembrance of love lost, while, supported vocally by Kris Crowley and Kathy Burleson, a deceased lumberjack's daughter is the central character in *Faller's Girl*.

Chicago's Wrigley Field, home to the Cubs, takes centre stage in *Big League Dreams*, wherein Bochner tells of a baseball player who ascended from the Cub's farm teams to the show—for only one game—and subsequently taught single A youngsters the sport's intricacies. *Bleeding At The Root* focuses on society's aforementioned malaise, while the pulsating heart of this collection lies in *Unknown Blessings* and the ensuing *Bells Of Lightning* with both possessing spiritual overtones. The seven-and-a-half minute long closer, and live recording, bears the concise title *You Can Say That My Empathy Is Starting To Atrophy, But Don't You Underestimate The Depth Of My Apathy*. A no-holds-barred expose of 21<sup>st</sup> century society mores (peppered with home truths), unsuitable for airplay, Ben is accompanied thereon by Amanda LeBlanc (vocals) and Hank Shreve (harmonica).

**Arthur Wood**

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

### Ellis WHEREVER YOU ARE

Singing Crow Music

★★★★☆

*Infectious,  
engaging,  
breathtaking and  
inspirational.*



Houston, Texas born, Minneapolis, Minnesota based Ellis (Delaney nee Bergeron) was one of the half-dozen New Folk Song Contest winners at this year's Kerrville Folk Festival. *WHEREVER YOU ARE* is a triple disc set, discs one and two combined spanning almost 100 minutes (duration), with each disc featuring eight songs. *WHEREVER YOU ARE* was recorded on October 20, 2012 at the White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church in Mahtomedi, Minnesota. Disc three delivers ten songs [\*], seven drawn from Disc 1, stripped of Ellis' introductions and audience applause.

Ellis has likened sharing her songs with an audience as 'a conversation,' and proof of that summation is contained on discs one and two. Possessed of an infectious laugh, which on first hearing may take you aback, her between songs links are half 'oh my gosh' goofy, half crystal clear personal convictions. Ellis launches disc one with the autumnal and inspirational *500 Crows* [\*]—one of her New Folk submissions—a paean to communication blessed by the open and personal revelation: 'Love I am part heartache, part joyful child, I'm a grown up that's still growing up.' Accepted earthly perceptions are turned on their head in *How Would It Be* [\*]—sic. 'How would you feel if the ground was really the sky,' the ensuing *Red Light* advocates openness to life's magical moments, while *Comes Back To Me* [\*] is launched by the confession: 'I have a memory like a big fishing net, When things fall out I tend to forget.' Written for, and about, her beloved grandmother, *You Are Royalty To Me* [\*] poses the question: 'How do you write a song for a queen?' and subsequently affirms: 'I am who I am, because I was loved by a queen.' *Right On Time* [\*] written during the late noughties for her daughter, is followed by *Coffee Song* [\*] a humorous tribute to the musician's helpless bean 'n' caffeine addiction, and disc one closes with the inspirational *Wherever You Are* [\*] complete with audience participation.

Disc two opens with *Blackbird* [\*] another avian world themed number, and doubling as a road song is followed on personal and universal levels by the tender *Coming Home To You*. A 'damned if you do, damned if you don't' dharma inspired exploration of the human condition is undertaken in *Tigers Above, Tigers Below*, while *Right Now* [\*] reveals