

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

Charlie Winston RUNNING STILL

Real World Records:

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★★★★

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

Chris Daniels BETTER DAYS

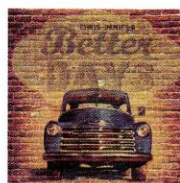
Self-released

★★★★

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

Chris Vallillo THE LAST DAY OF WINTER

Gin Ridge Music

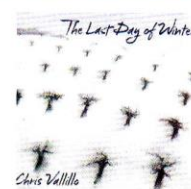
★★★★

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,



past and present, Illinois-based Vallillo's half-dozen previous solo releases have been firmly planted in the fertile soil of carefully selected covers and self-penned material, presented in an acoustic folk music framework. Relative to the contents of this release, the closing phrase is the lynchpin, since the 13-selection album merges instrumentals and songs—the former traditional and original, the latter all original. By way of adding some clarity, Vallillo's voice is heard on four self-penned tunes, and he's supported throughout by permutations of bass, drums, percussion, cello, fiddle and more. For those who reside in the Midwest, the album title when spoken is doubtless followed by a great sigh of relief.

The traditional *Old Joe Clark* opens, and the nine instrumentals include Vallillo originals *The Last Day Of Winter* and *Saugatuck*—the latter the name of a Lake Michigan shoreline town. I'll admit that for decades I've retained a soft spot for those (popular) traditional airs *The Water Is Wide* and *Shenandoah* and Vallillo truly does them justice here. Moving to

the heart of 20th century, there's The Champs transatlantic one-hit wonder *Tequila*, penned by the late Danny Flores, which won the first ever Best Rhythm & Blues Performance Grammy in 1958. Much favoured by country-rock bands at the dawn of the 1970s, the gospel flavoured *Farther Along* lyric was penned in 1911 by an itinerant preacher, plus an instrumental rendition closes this collection.

Decades don't dim great songs and here, Chris reprises *Silhouette Against The Stars*; his 'chill of a November night' tribute to Midwestern grain farmers. It previously appeared on his 1987 debut *THE WESTERN ILLINOIS RAG*. A letter from the road, in the inspirational *Lettie's Song* the narrator observes a barn-raising, meets a 'woman in full bloom' he last saw as a 'little girl' and revisits an old, once familiar 'place of last retreat' that has become 'a big-time tourist town.' This song is simply a gem. *River Road* is a travelogue that depicts Illinois fields which 'stretch out like endless rows of corduroy,' layers of limestone that 'bear witness to the years, prehistoric oceans, ancient belvederes'

and more. During the period 1875-1926, Illinois' Williamson County was the site of several outbreaks of violence. It's the 1922 Herrin miner's strike that's (specifically) recalled in *Bloody Williamson*. By the time you read this review, detailed liner notes and photographs of the early to late 20th century instruments used to create *THE LAST DAY OF WINTER*—including a nine string guitar and a tenor lute—will be posted at his website. **Arthur Wood**

www.chrisvallillo.com

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hump 135

★★★★

Album number
nine maintains the
quality and edginess

Against all the odds Gary Allan has survived an incredible 18 years on MCA-Decca and has watched highly successful acts like Mark Chesnutt, Tracy Byrd, Lee Ann Womack, the Mavericks, etc, come and go as he's tenaciously held on to his contract



Rebecca Pronsky Only Daughter

"Pronsky's performance stands head and shoulders above most of her contemporaries" - *R2 Magazine*

"This Brooklyn native should be a household name as far as we're concerned." - *Ruth Barnes, BBC 6*

"Very fine! Worth seeking out. I'm particularly impressed with Pronsky's voice." - *Iain Anderson, BBC Scotland*



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Scott Keirs



"Strong songs that are refreshingly well-written and performed" - Dave Arcari (*Radiotones*)

"A blossoming singer/songwriter... Highly effective" - Adrian Cooke (*Maverick Magazine*)

"He delivers personal, lyrically driven songs with confidence, passion and a simplicity that allows the lyrics to speak to you" - James Clarke (*My Other Life*)

"F***ing superb" - Chris Helme (*The Seahorses/The Yards*)

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