

Dusty Relics - Re-issues & Compilations

the addition of strings. Among the other selections are *Armen's Theme*, a hit for David Seville before the latter created Alvin and the Chipmunks. It was also known as *Yesterday And You, Let It Be Me*, an Everly Brothers hit, Fats Waller's lively *Jitterbug Waltz* and soulful renditions of *The Three Bells*, *Santa Lucia* and *Greensleeves*, with *Meet Mister Callaghan* bringing the album to a close.

These two albums alone make ELEGANT CHET a listening pleasure, but the addition of 7 bonus tracks which Chet recorded in Nashville between July 1957 and May 1958 make this a genuine value for money release. The bonus tracks are *Jungle Drums*, *Walk, Don't Run*, *Lullaby Of The Leaves*, *Avorada* (Little Music Box), *Bourree*, *Siesta* and *Stinkey*. **LK** www.elrecords.co.uk

Chet Nichols PRAIRIE HARVEST VOL. 2: THE BEST OF SERIES Magic Garage Records

★★★★

Veteran indie artists fails to impress with this retrospective collection

Chet Nichols has been around for a long time. To date he has released 16 albums of mainly original material and on this 15 track compilation he selects recordings from no less than 6 of his earlier albums: *TIME LOOP*, *WAVING PRAIRIE*, *TAXI TO TONGANOXIE*, *LUCKY MAN*, *MODERN PROGRESS* and *WALKING IN CIRCLES*. There is a great diversity, both musically and lyrically in his choice of material which makes it rather difficult to know quite where to pitch him, other than to, reluctantly, pin the tag 'singer-songwriter' on his work.

The opening track, *Spinning On The Time Loop* was originally recorded back in 1972. He engages the talent of Zahir Hussain, playing tabla on *Waving Prairie*, while *Kites In The County*, at around 7 minutes, fails to hold the listener's undivided attention, as does the closing track, *The Beetles Are Coming*, with a playing time approaching 8 minutes, with a frenetic guitar intro of 2 minutes, which smacks of a lengthy moment of self indulgence. There are, however, some reasonable country styled songs which have been included, notably *You've Got The Keys To My Heart*, a fiddle dominated hoedown, *Paper Burns*, with some nice work on the steel, *Lucky Man*, *Honky Tonk Rock And Roll*, which sounds a bit like something one might have heard from a survivor of the Urban Cowboy period, *Tangled Up In You* and *Thank You For Breaking My Heart*, which, even today, could be picked up by some big hitter and turned into a sizeable hit. Nichols has a pleasant voice, quite listenable, but as mentioned, his choice of material is too diverse.

There have been many songs written about Route 66, the 'Mother

Road' which ran between Chicago and Los Angeles. Apparently, Nichols is something of an expert on the history of this long, meandering road, and his *Last Riders On Rt 66* is interesting.

Clearly, with 16 albums under his belt, Chet Nichols must have a sizeable following, and it should be pointed out that among the many accolades that he has received over the years he is also an inductee in the Kansas Music Hall of Fame. Perhaps it is simply the diversity of material on this compilation which failed to impress this reviewer. **LK** www.chetnicholsmusic.net

Clyde Moody THE GOOD OL' DAYS

Righteous 23.37

★★★★

In his time Clyde Moody had worked with loads of different artists so their inclusion on this compilation is quite appropriate

Born in Cherokee, North Carolina in 1915, Clyde Moody played an important part in the development of bluegrass and country music from the late 1930s, but despite the contributions that he made to the music, he never really received the level of recognition he deserved and today his name is remembered by few, except those who have followed the roots of the music closely. He started out in the mid-1930s as a part of the Happy Go Lucky Boys before being recruited to J.E.Mainer's Mountaineers in 1938. He later joined Merle Travis, Grandpa Jones and the Delmore Brothers as part of the Browns Ferry Four before becoming one of the original members of Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Boys in 1940, and apart from a short stint with Lester Flatt, he remained with Monroe until 1945, appearing on the Opry and numerous festivals with him. Moody particularly enjoyed playing waltzes and he eventually earned himself the title, Hillbilly Waltz King. One of his lasting legacies to country music was the composition *Shenandoah Waltz*, which he co-wrote with fiddler, Chubb Wise in 1947 and which is still a favourite with country and bluegrass bands to this day.

THE GOOD OL' DAYS is a compilation of some of Moody's country recordings and they remind us that, apart from the work he did in the bluegrass field, he was a fine traditional country performer. Naturally, having been dubbed Hillbilly Waltz King, one might reasonably expect a sample of why he earned that title, so there are four waltzes which have been included in the 22 song set, two which he composed, *Carolina Waltz* and *Shenandoah Waltz*, along with *Cherokee Waltz* and *West Virginia Waltz*. In addition to these there are a couple of fine country blues, nostalgic ballads, sentimental songs

like *I Love You Because* and *You're A Real Sweetheart To Me*, with a number of wistful loser's laments, including *Tears On My Pillow*, written by Gene Autry and Fred Rose. The reproduction is excellent, and that includes two tracks, *It's Too Late To Say You Were Wrong* and *There's A Big Rock In The Road*, which were taken from a couple of 78rpm records but have been enhanced while still retaining the spirit of the age during which they were recorded.

The first 22 tracks are all straight country, but since Moody had worked closely with some of the big names in bluegrass it was felt that, in order to get a taste of that period in his life, it would be interesting to recapture the sounds with which he was involved. He does not actually play a part in any of the seven additional recordings, but we do get to hear songs from the Stanley Brothers and the Clinch Mountain Boys, Howdy Forrester, Jimmy Martin and the Sunny Mountain Boys, Mac Wiseman, Reno and Smiley, the Osborne Brothers and Bill Monroe. In his time Clyde Moody had worked with all these artists so their inclusion on this compilation is quite appropriate. **LK** www.righteous23.com

Dar Williams MANY GREAT COMPANIONS Razor & Tie Records

★★★★★

What a delight!

Two decades of

Dar encapsulated

on two discs, one an acoustic reprise the other a studio retrospective.

Dorothy Snowden Williams draws a veil over the opening two decades of her recording career with a 2-CD collection that serves as a reprise and a retrospective. Disc 1 is sub-titled *SONGS REVISITED WITH GUITAR AND A FEW FRIENDS*, while the twenty-song accompanying disc bears the self-explanatory nom de plume *THE BEST OF DAR WILLIAMS*.

Already songwriting collaborators, production of Disc 1 is credited to Dar and Gary Louris (the Jayhawks) and the latter's acoustic guitar and/or voice graces seven of the one-dozen tunes, as for other guest contributors, more about them later. In terms of aural approach *SONGS REVISITED* mirrors recent 2-CD releases by Josh Ritter and Patty Larkin. Ritter teamed each of three studio produced albums (on which he was supported by an electric band), with a disc that replicated the songs employing only his acoustic guitar and voice. As for Larkin's 25—celebrating quarter of a century in the music business—supported by 25 friends, including Dar, Patty selected and revisited 25 love songs from her eleven album catalogue.

Having witnessed Patty in performance, I can attest that she is living proof that girls can play guitars. So ... including Larkin on guitar, *SONGS REVISITED* closes with

a wonderful rendition of *When I Was A Boy* one of Williams' early career signature tunes. Other Disc 1 guest contributors include Sean and Sara Watkins (*The Christians And The Pagans*) and Mary Chapin Carpenter (*The One Who Knows*). With the addition of New York based vocal trio MotherLode, all of the former (guests) accompany Williams and Louris on the sensually worded *Iowa*.

As a musical statement it was inevitable that *MANY GREAT COMPANIONS* would contain Disc 1 acoustic interpretations matched by already familiar Disc 2 studio renditions—there are only six of them. Well constructed (folk) songs are, however, living and breathing entities that evolve with the passage of time. In reinterpreting *What Do You Hear In These Sounds*, *The One Who Knows* and *You Rise And Meet The Day*, Dar not only nails them musically she brings out nuances in the lyric that I was previously unaware of. The twelve-page liner booklet is chock full of testimonies, to Dar's talent and humanity, penned by her folk music contemporaries.

As I noted at the outset, Disc 2 delivers twenty highlights from her back catalogue. If you've never been to Dar, *MANY GREAT COMPANIONS* is the perfect primer. Through the closing decade of the last century and the opening ten of the new one, Dar's lyrics explored and mapped every facet of the human condition. As she grew, matured and gained wisdom so did we. Amen to phase one, and here's to phase two ... **AW** <http://www.darwilliams.com/>

Heather Myles LIVE IN LONDON AND TEXAS Floating World Records

★★★★★

*From a Scottish
bloodline, Myles*

is a Bakersfield style country musician by choice

Disc 1, the *LIVE IN LONDON* segment of this value-for-money two-disc set, previously appeared in the public domain during early 1996 on the Demon label and was titled *SWEET LITTLE DANGEROUS: LIVE AT THE BOTTOM LINE*. Across fourteen songs the honky-tonk gal from Riverside, California is accompanied by Gary Brandin (pedal steel), Gary Hewitt (bass), and Ann Day (drums), plus the inimitable Wes McGhee—one of only two guitarists I'd pay good money to go see, and the other isn't Richard Thompson.

Hightone Records had released two Myles albums by the time she recorded *LIVE IN LONDON* on August 9, 1995 at this now defunct Shepherd's Bush venue. Heather draws a handful of songs from those sets including her compositions *Changes*, *Run And Rodeo*—a tribute to rodeo rider Casey Tibbs, and Disc 1 closer *Cadillac Cowboy*. As for Myles penned tunes featured on

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LIVE IN LONDON that surfaced on subsequent releases, they include *Love Me A Little Bit Longer*, *If The Truth Hurts* and *Sweet Little Dangerous*. A self-acknowledged Buck Owens and Loretta Lynn fan, on Disc 1 Myles covers the former's *Gonna Have Love*, while Lola Jean Dillon's *When The Tingle Becomes A Chill* gave the coalminer's daughter a number 2 country single back in 1975.

The liner booklet imparts no information regarding the recording date of LIVE IN TEXAS, nor for that matter the venue or the support players. The ten selections are a similar mix of Myles penned originals and cover songs. Featured on last year's Myles self-release IN THE WIND, Disc 2 opens with Leroy Van Dyke's *Walk On By*—a US country chart song on five occasions since 1961, while the ensuing *Vaya Con Dios* was a US pop number 1 in 1953 for Les Paul and Mary Ford. Could their inclusion be a clue that Disc 2 is a recent recording?

Following Disc 2's third selection, a rendition of Marty Robbins' *Begging To You*, it's nothing but miles and miles of Myles. The seven originals include the familiar *Broken Heart For Sale* and *Playin' Every Honky Tonk In Town*, as well as the previously unrecorded songs *A Shoulder To Cry On* and *One Man One Woman Again*. If honky-tonk country is your particular musical poison, Myles is assuredly the cure. **AW**
<http://www.heathermyles.com/>

Ian Siegal THE DUST

Nugene Records
NUG803

★★★★

Powerful acoustic blues

Blues is such a hoary and hackneyed musical form that it takes a special performer to rise above the tiredness and clichés to deliver something genuinely moving and mighty. Ian Siegal is such a man and THE DUST, his first solo acoustic album, is a mighty and muscular slice of rootsy and ragged backwoods blues. First available in 2008 as a show-only album, it's now getting a full official release.

Nine studio and three live tracks showcase his red raw throaty vocals and powerful guitar playing with no flash solos but real energy and power in every pluck of the strings. Covers of Mary Gauthier's *I Drink* and Steve Earle's *CCKMP* sit comfortably alongside originals like the ferociously driving *The Silver Spurs* and the apocalyptic *Stranger Clothed In Linen*. Throughout Siegal displays a beautiful touch on the guitar and truly passionate singing, converting the old chestnut *Mary Don't You Weep* (one of the three live cuts) into something visceral, almost elemental in its purity and power, and *I'll Fly Away* to a defiant yowl of rage a very long way removed from the likes of Allison Krauss's version.

BJ Cole adds a hint of steel from

time to time but apart from that, a sliver of pump organ and a hint of backing vocals on a couple of tracks this is blues in its purest form: one man, one guitar, and one hell of a lot of passion and power. You won't hear a better blues album this year. **JS**
www.iansiegal.com

John Stewart with Chuck McDermott ILLINOIS RAIN Folk Era Productions ★★★★

This two-disc live set finds Stewart, circa 1984, at the top of his game

As Alan Shaw tells it in the liner notes, it was a dark and stormy night in Chicago on Friday June 22, 1984 when he made his debut as a concert promoter. Stewart and McDermott arrived at the venue less than an hour before they were due to take the stage, Stewart's previous solo appearance in Chicago having been eleven years earlier. ILLINOIS RAIN began life as a video the soundtrack to which has been extracted and cleaned by Justin Zellers and Jeff McDonald, who were responsible for similar work on the decades-old unreleased Stewart studio and live recordings that became THE PIANO ALBUM (2009) and BITE MY FOOT (2009).

Having released two country-rock albums with his Boston based band Wheatstraw, in 1980 McDermott relocated to Los Angeles where he formed the Chuck McDermott Band. After meeting Stewart a friendship developed leading to Chuck's appearance on John's releases BLONDES (1982), and concurrent with the recording of this live set the UK release of TRANCAS (1984), as well as the subsequent THE LAST CAMPAIGN (1985) and PUNCH THE BIG GUY (1987). While introducing *Clack Clack/Oldest Living Son*, which appeared on the foregoing 1985 release, John mentions that he's formed his own label, Homecoming, in order to release it. Having worked in the studio and performed onstage with Stewart for much of the early 1980s, with long established family connections to the Kennedy dynasty, during 1985 McDermott relocated to Washington DC and the nation's corridors of power. Since 1998 Charles J. McDermott has worked for RockPort Capital Partners, a Boston based energy and financial services company.

Stewart launches Disc 1 with *July, You're A Woman* which first appeared on SIGNALS THROUGH THE GLASS (1968)—recorded with his wife Buffy Ford—and again on his ensuing and stunning solo debut CALIFORNIA BLOODLINES (1969). He follows with *Runaway Fool Of Love* a song John claims to have written specifically for Elvis. Disc 1 includes renditions of *Chilly Winds* penned by the two Johns—Phillips and Stewart, and written 'on a rowboat in the middle

of Sausalito Bay one day"—and *They Call The Wind Mariah* from the Broadway musical and movie PAINT YOUR WAGON. Swapping his electric guitar for a banjo John performs Billy Ed Wheeler's *Coal Tattoo*. Toward the close of Disc 1, Chuck steps out from his support role on electric guitar and support vocals, and delivers Springsteen's *I'm On Fire* followed by his own tune *Starting Over*.

Disc 2 opens with another SIGNALS THROUGH THE GLASS selection, namely *Cody*. Moving on, just over a decade later *Lost Her In The Sun* graced BOMBS AWAY DREAM BABIES, 18 Wheels appeared on Stewart's previous outing FIRE IN THE WIND, while *Queen Of Hollywood High* surfaced on BLONDES. Following an extended version of his 1979 US number 5 pop hit single *Gold*, Stewart ends the concert with *You Can't Go Back To Kansas*, inspired by the late Robert Kennedy's 1968 primary campaign for US president, and the older number *Mother Country*—the latter pair are performed sans the wall of guitars sound employed on much of this set. In his liner note Shaw reveals that his wife's name is Jenny and appended to, and closing, Disc 2 is a studio version of *Jenny At The Wheel*. **AW**
<http://www.rediscoversmusic.com/product/3432/16>

Linda Ronstadt LINDA RONSTADT/ HEART LIKE A WHEEL Raven RVCD-325

★★★★★

Two classic albums on one CD from the Grammy Award winning US songstress

This is the third in a series of double reissues from Linda Ronstadt's Capitol Records back catalogue. Raven Records from Australia have done another fine job and this offering features her last two Capitol releases before switching to David Geffen's Asylum label. The self titled album from 1972 features some glorious country covers; Ralph Mooney's ever popular *Crazy Arms*, Johnny Cash's *I Still Miss Someone* and Hank Cochran's *I Fall To Pieces*. Jackson Browne's *Rock Me On The Water* and Neil Young's *Birds* are other standout tracks. Having switched to Asylum, Linda still owed Capitol one more album and Peter Asher (of Peter and Gordon fame) was brought in to oversee proceedings. With his guidance Linda rocketed to fame to become the top female artist of the 1970s. HEART LIKE A WHEEL is a classic album in every sense of the word. Released in November 1974, it shot to number one on the Billboard charts the following February. At the same time *You're No Good* hit number one on their pop singles chart whilst the B-side, Hank Williams' *I Can't Help It (If I'm Still In Love With You)* hit number two in the country charts. Linda's cover of the Everly Brothers

classic *When Will I Be Loved* topped the country charts and peaked at number two with pop. The album is packed with standout tracks; J D Souther's *Faithless Love*, Anna McGarrigle's title track, Lowell George's trucking song *Willin'*, and Paul Craft's *Keep Me From Blowing Away*.

The package includes three bonus tracks; *Can It Be True*, used on the soundtrack of the film *The Marriage of a Young Stockbroker* and issued as the B-side to *I Fall To Pieces* in 1971. *Living Like A Fool* and *He Darked the Sun* are from a short recording session at the Record Plant, New York in 1969 and were originally issued as a 12" single by Capitol. They then turned up on the strange various artists album MUSIC FROM FREE CREEK in 1973. Raven claim that these two are on CD for the first time although FREE CREEK was in fact, issued in this format in 2006.

The mix of country, folk, pop, country-rock and ballads makes for an extremely enjoyable listen and is highly recommended to those not familiar with the music of this extremely talented artist. **JR**
<http://www.ronstadt-linda.com/>

Ola Belle Reed RISING SUN MELODIES

Smithsonian
Folkways
Recording SFW CD
40202

★★★★★

Classic old-timey music

Ola Belle Campbell was born in 1916 in the small, rural community of Grassy Creek, Lansing, Ashe County, North Carolina. One of thirteen children, both her parents were musical, as indeed was her grandfather, so it wasn't surprising that Ola Belle learned to play the banjo at an early age, later playing the guitar as well. There was only one family within the community who possessed a radio—of sorts—and even then it could only be heard through a fairly primitive set of headphones, so the music that Ola grew up listening to was the sweet melodies and honest lyrics of those seeped in the Appalachian tradition which she absorbed like a sponge before she started to compose her own music, predominately in that style. During the Great Depression the Campbell family, like many other Appalachian mountain people, moved to Chester County in search of work, and then the Campbells moved on to Cecil County, Maryland. They took their music with them and in 1936 Ola Belle formed the North Carolina Ridge Runners, initially playing for displaced Appalachian audiences. The band continued for a dozen years reaching an ever wider audience. When Ola Belle's brother, Alex, was demobilised from the services he joined his sister and they started the New River Boys.