

BRUM

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BEAT

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Winners Circle

The Dep International Studios/ Brum Beat Competition Winners - We Present The Best Unsigned Bands In The Region

Flowerhouse



"We may put our own single out"

Unit 213



"I think we'll be around forever"

Big Trouble



"We've got three album's worth of material"

We'll Always Have Paris



"... highly polished material ..."

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VARIOUS

Northern Soul / Disco / Slow Groove (Deep Beats / Castle)

Three more soul / dance gems from Deep Beats; Northern Soul, the four square approximation of early Motown rounds up Trampms, Fred Hughes, Jackie Wilson and loads more with unfamiliar names but familiar sounds but amazingly, no Chuck Woods. Slow Groove is for sophisticats who wanna get as deep as you can during thirteen plus minutes of James Gilstrap's Love Talk. We are talking lurve. Disco is from the golden age of Musique's In The Bush, Shalamar's Uptown Festival and The Tramps' Penguin At The Big Apple. Jeeves; ma flares ...

★★★ (each)

Sam Mitchell

FOLK & COUNTRY

VINCE BELL

Phoenix (Watermelon / Direct Distribution)

To date Vince Bell is probably best known as the author of Sun & Moon & Stars and Woman OT the Phoenix which Nanci Griffith covered on, Late Night Grande Hotel and Other Voices / Other Rooms respectively.

Produced with finesse by Bob Neuworth mostly in an acoustic folk / blues framework, there's an observational and uneasy edge to Bell's poetry. Each story remains incomplete. The listener is expected to furnish the missing part. While The Beast explores the eerie, I've Had Enough is as aching a tale of love gone bad, as you'll ever hear and Sun & Moon & Stars is a towering classic of a song.

★★★★

Arthur Wood

LEE CLAYTON

Spirit Of The Twilight (Provogue)

The semi legendary country outlaw's second album for the Dutch label is a mixed bag indeed. It makes little concession to the artiste's country heritage, for the most part sounding like a run of the mill bar-room boogie band. And that despite the presence of such studio heavyweights as bassist James Blennerhassett and guitarist (and the set's producer) Philip Donnelly.

One of the problems is Clayton's writing. At the album's best, he seems to be attempting the big subjects, you know, life, the universe, but despite the odd couplet that hits the target, his thoughts seem ill organised. At worst the material is trite and stumbles over seventies clichés embarrassingly; check Woman On The Road or The Road.

There's enough here to save Clayton from absolute ignominy but compared to his peer, Billie Joe Shaver's Tramp On Your Street comeback set, this is small, nay, alcohol free beer.

★★

Steve Morris

CHRISTINE COLLISTER

Live (Fledg'ling)

If folk music can have torch singers, Collister is a blazing beacon. Her first album since the end of the Gregson / Collister partnership affords welcome opportunity to hear the sensuous whisky-honeyed voice, with its haunting ability to capture the essence of pain, regret and longing, captured in all its live splendour. Featuring a glorious selection of songs ranging from Rickie Lee Jones' Last Chance Texaco and kd lang's Outside Myself to Lieber and Stoller's Trying To Get To You and her own, pointedly titled, Starting All Over, it's a both

testament to a remarkable talent and a indictment of major labels for not signing her up and turning her into the international star she deserves to be.

★★★★

Mike Davies

KATELL KEINIG

O Seasons O Castles (Elektra)

Keinig's time has been long in coming. A Breton-Welsh singer-songwriter, she was signed up by Phonogram a few years back only to be mysteriously dropped and any tracks she'd recorded junked. Then she released the astonishing Hestia as an import single on Bob Mould's Singles Only label. Now, further down the line she's finally made it to album. And, titled after a Rimbaud poem, a superb offering it is too. Dominantly folk-jazz with a smokey voice and atmospheric guitar playing that accentuates the Joni Mitchell meets John Martyn comparisons, it's immaculately crafted but not so polished you can't feel the blood coursing through the veins. Musically eclectic, as well as the varied shades of jazz you'll hear flamenco, Latin, and Celtic soul influences, there's even a haunting acappella Welsh hymn. And her emotional songs of love or self-assertion like Partisan and the swingingly Van Morrisonesque Destiny's Darling show she's no slouch as a modern beatnik lyricist either. Late in the day perhaps, but one of the year's most auspicious debuts.

★★★★

Mike Davies

CARRIE NEWCOMER

An Angel At My Shoulder (Philo / Direct Distribution)

At the starting gate, the uptempo duo Only One Shoe and Streamline ring out as anthems in praise of the act of ignoring adversity, forgetting the past and having the firm resolve to carry on, carrying on. Newcomer explores four generations of her family tree in Love Like An Immigrant. She encapsulates her parents life together with the panoramic line, They put a dime in the juke box, took a turn on the dance floor. Simplicity, and perfection become seamless. And just when you think the lady has no funny bone, she zaps you with generations of finely observed social mores, in the amusing My Momma Said It's True.

★★★★

Arthur Wood

SHOOGLENIFTY

Venus In Tweeds (Greentrax)

If there isn't yet such a thing as acoustic hip hop trad folk, this Scottish sextet are probably on the way to inventing it. Spinning out from a traditional base of reels, pipe tunes and jigs with a broad grin on their faces, they invest the dance instrumentals with a wild, sometimes dub feel that seems more likely to be at home at a rave than a ceilidh. Then they'll turn round and throw in a spot of Dave Brubeck jazz for good measure. There's no visible techno, the band relying on fiddle, mandolin, banjo, guitar and drums, but there're times (Two Fifty To Vigo and Paranoia for starters) when they could give the Aphex Twin and The Orb a few lessons on mood enhancers. If your image of traditional Scottish dance music is the White Heather Club, then lend an ear to this and prepare to be gobsmacked.

★★★★

Mike Davies

RE-ISSUES

JIMMY BUFFETT

All The Great Hits (Prism Leisure)

Buffett's Key West inspired, autobiographical and often whimsical songs of sailing, sipping and screwing are a happy fusion of Texas and the

Caribbean, though sadly UK releases have been non-existent for several years and this mid-price collection is in fact the only one currently available here. No problem since it gathers together 18 classics, among them Margaritaville, Changes In Latitude, Changes In Attitude, the wistfully reflective A Pirate Looks At Forty and He Went To Paris, the sparkling children's fantasy song Chanson Pour Les Petits Enfants and the notorious and instantly banned Why Don't We Get Drunk And Screw. Sadly though, no room for the wonderfully titled My Head Hurts, My Feet Stink and I Don't Love Jesus.

★★★★

Mike Davies

COUSINS & WILLOUGHBY

The Bridge (Road Goes On Forever)

The titular bridge is the one which links the duo's acoustic persona and the all electric attack of The Strawbs, the band in which they both partake. The album was thus christened as both elements appear here with Strawbs past and present adding their skills.

The result is unavoidably Strawbs-ish; let's face it Dave Cousins nasal tones are so individual, it would be impossible not to make the connection. There is, a lack of the truly epic material that hallmarks that band though it would be easy to see The Plain alongside Brave New World.

This set won't convert anyone to the Cousins cause but it will delight the faithful.

★★★★

Steve Morris

CAROLYN HESTER

Texas Songbird (Road Goes On Forever)

Carolyn Hester was a chum of Buddy Holly, a pioneering sixties folkie who introduced Dylan to John Hammond (the man who signed him to Columbia) when Bobby played harmonica on an album of hers. Lately she's been championed by Nanci Griffith.

But the music; well until this album my acquaintance had been regrettably slim. I say regrettably as this disc, two albums in one, reveals a woman of fierce intelligence and concern. An eloquent and melodic singer songwriter who, far from sounding like a relic paraded as inspiration by a new generation, sounds like an artist who'd give the new breed a serious run for their money.

★★★★

Steve Morris

RALPH MCTELL

Slide Away The Screen & Other Stories (Road Goes On Forever)

One of the most amazing omissions from the CD catalogue is the series of excellent albums that McTell made for Warners in the seventies. But then again the overall oversight of McTell's outstanding writing and performing is something that continues to amaze when you consider the praise heaped on lesser talents with only geographical fashion to recommend them.

So, it's a good thing that John Tobler's label has unearthed not only the 1975, Dave Pegg produced Slide Away The Screen, but also five extra songs so that the complete sessions can now be heard. More, it's been remastered to sound as it should.

The material may not include any 'classics' but for anyone with a passion for literate and melodic writing and engaging performances, who doesn't think it weird that such virtues are homegrown, this is a compulsory purchase.

★★★★

Steve Morris