

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), *Bouree*, *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 Hussan, 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 Louis (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 Louis 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*, *Rum And Rodeo*—a tribute to rodeo rider Casey Tibbs, and Disc 1 closer *Cadillac Cowboy*. As for Myles penned tunes featured on