

RECENT REVIEW

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MARIANNE NOWOTTNY

Kung Fu Kitty OST

Abaton Book Company CD

www.abatonbookcompany.com



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Kung Fu Kitty, the film and book (available separately to the CD), is one of the reasons why I love the small presses and their cinematic wing, the shoestring-budget short film. It's heartfelt, cheap and eccentric, and about as niche as they come.

But what shouldn't be kept niche is the subtle, complex soundtrack by Marianne Nowotny. This lady has been making excellent – and hugely varied – albums for years, including 2002's carnivalesque *Illusions Of The Sun* and the more recent pop-orientated *What Is She Doing?*. Here, Nowotny blends a grassy outdoor feel with music-box simplicity and twangy Eastern strings to produce a genuinely atmospheric record that works even more effectively outside the film. For fans of Colleen or Laurie Anderson, as well as those who appreciate Bjork's avant-garde tics.

Jeanette Leech

INTO THE STRATOSPHERE

It's time to lose your mind, baby.

LONELY LONDON LAD Foaming At The Mouth

Lonely London Lad Records Inc CD
www.myspace.com/lonelylondonlad



Robert Savage displays an archetypal, mad as a box of frogs, English eccentricity and a talent for quirky lyrics – a kind of Ray Davies for the 2010s if

you like. But the influence of eccentric mavericks like Beck also shines through, and comparisons to The Wild Beasts wouldn't be too far off the mark either. You might even imagine Daevud Allen and Gong on the psychedelic 'Black On Blue'.

Although continuing in pretty much the same vein as Lonely London Lad's largely electronic-based eponymous debut album, *Foaming At The Mouth* is a much more coherent and consistently

pleasing effort, perhaps partly due to the fact that it's condensed onto a single disc, as opposed to being spread over two rather sprawling CDs.

On the evidence of this outing, Lonely London Lad is certainly deserving of wider recognition, but given Savage's alleged antipathy towards the music industry one doubts whether he'll play the game somehow.
Rich Deakin

MUSHROOM Naked, Stoned & Stabbed

4Zero CD
www.4zerorecords.com



In which the SF-based musicians' collective Mushroom get all queuing and ambient on your ass under the stated influence of such goateads as

Davy Graham, Alice Coltrane and Fela Kuti. An entirely instrumental undertaking – with the exception of a winningly reverential cover of

Kevin Ayers' 'Singing A Song In The Morning' – *Naked, Stoned & Stabbed* is not necessarily the sort of thing you would listen to with rapt, note-taking attentiveness unless you had a busily percolating bong close at hand. Nevertheless, its constantly shifting tapestry of textures and instrumentation – everything from sitar, celesta and dulcimer to orchestron and flutophone – creates the most lucid pictures on the dusty screen in the members' cinema of your mind.

These semi-improvised pieces, bearing deliciously loaded titles such as 'Tariq Ali' and 'Jerry Rubin: He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother', take you on the long road to enlightenment by stealth. Float on, ladies and gentlemen.
Marco Rossi

OBSKURIA Burning Sea Of Green

World In Sound CD/LP
www.worldinsound.com

This is the second album from a psych supergroup of sorts led by Tom Brehm from Ohio's '60s psych monsters Dragonwyck. He's



resurfaced alongside some equally decorous colleagues for an album of dense heavy psychedelic swampy rock that owes as much to Black

Mountain and Spiritualized as it does to their '60s forebears. However, they notably out-rock all of the aforementioned with huge sludgy riffs that verge on doom-metal at some points.

That's not to say it's without subtlety – repeated listens reveal complex keyboard washes, bass shibboleths and great organ/guitar interplay. The long, twisting 'Why' is a standout and they even weave a Slayer (!) cover of 'Black Magic' into a manic psych treat with a nice female vocal that's similar in sound to Blood Ceremony.

Given World In Sound's superb quality control over its reissue label it's no surprise that their contemporary choices uphold the quality of the imprint. Go check this out along with their other modern titles
Austin Matthews

Club (as part of The International Pop Overthrow festival) and was designed to pay homage to the British Invasion. Interestingly, while The Mailbooz may have wanted this album to sound viddy British, it ends up retaining much more of an American feel, particularly in the influence of The Byrds on such tracks as 'Hey Love', the soft 'Bitter Gray' and 'Good Tonight', but there are echoes of the Invasion on the excellent rocker 'She Comes Around' and the power poppin' 'So Bad'.

Luminaries abound on this record, such as Tony Hicks of The Hollies, Spenser Davis, The Quarrymen (!), Andrew Loog Oldham (!), Richard Moore (of The Troggs), and members of The Shadows, making it a true US meets UK affair.
David Bash

THE RICH MORTON SOUND The Theme That Never Was

Self-released CD
www.therichmortonsound.com



An absorbing album even before I heard a note, Rich Morton's "Retropolitan" concept was to write themes for imaginary '60s TV shows in the vein of

The Avengers, *The Saint* and so on. With affectionately crafted liner notes on these "lost pilots" (even including cast lists), the same attention to detail is present in the music. 'Supersonic Sonata' is both wry and grandiose, 'Sounds Cinematic' is strangely rousing (being the theme for *Time Trip*, set in antique shop Psychedelic Relics!) whilst 'Colour Me Groovy', with its audible wink, is a pitch perfect riposte.

Perhaps Morton's themes are too authentic at times, when they rely heavily on brass and blare and teeter on the repetitive. However, tracks like 'Symphomaniac', which manages to allude to both John Barry and Grieg in its solemn melody, and the precision of Dave O'Brien's production lift the album above mere pastiche, making for an imaginative triumph.
Emma Stott

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Jeanette Leech

OLD MAN LUEDECKE My Hands Are On Fire And Other Love Songs

Black Hen CD
www.blackhenmusic.com



Banjo-playing singer-songwriter Luedecke's wonderful throwback, rootsy sound – recalling the acoustically rustic world of Bascom

Lunsford, Ralph Stanley, even Pete Seeger on topical efforts like the Wall Street commentary 'Woe Betide The Doer Of The Deed' and a sorrowful tale of pollution titled 'The Palace Is Golden' – works just as well within a group framework as it does solo. Of course, it helps when his band-mates include the likes of fiddler and mandolinist Tim O'Brien and guitarist, pump organist and album producer Steve Dawson.

Luedecke has always had that rare musical ability to honour but not be trapped by tradition – efforts such as the melancholy 'Machu Picchu', a restless 'Lass Vicious', the unnervingly philosophical 'The Rear Guard' and an awesome cover of Canadian folk legend

Willie Bennett's wistful ode to the 'Caney Fork River' vividly underscore this observation.
Gary von Tersch

OF ARROWE HILL A Few Minutes In The Absolute Elsewhere



Five albums in and the redoubtable Adam Easterbrook has hit his stride. This might be the Arrowes' best album yet, covering several styles of post-

punk-psych in 34 minutes yet still sounding epic, and thankfully the (coincidental) Gallagherisms that marred the otherwise superb *In Dolce Domum* have fallen away, replaced by a ragged clang closer to their original Beefheart-Elevators-Buzzcocks template.

Lyrical, the same themes dominate: an adoration of MR James, Mario Bava and horror in general (further displayed by the Pan Book *homage* of the inner sleeve) tempered with caustic wit, best displayed on funereal vignette 'All Roads Lead To Quinns'. Add some oblique references (the title 'You, The Night And Pere-Lachaise' being but one example), stir in melodies good enough to rival XTC and Kevin Ayers ('Her Solipsistic Lipstick') and you have a contender for album of the year – even if sadly, their DIY distribution ethos means few will hear it.
Darius Drewe Shimon

JEN OLIVE Warm Robot

Ape CD
www.ape.uk.net



Don't you just love a record label you can trust? Andy Partridge's Ape label is fast becoming a safe haven for some of the worthiest square pegs in contemporary music, and Albuquerque native Jen Olive is the latest recipient of Partridge's mutually beneficial benediction.

Jen's compositions are softly sung, subtly strange susurrations, usually based around her persuasively idiosyncratic acoustic guitar figures.

Either she favours singularly abstruse tunings or has tentacle fingers, but the obliquely dancing tone clusters which propel 'Franscrams!', 'So Funny' and 'Robot Boy' sound like highlight guitar from Venus, allied to lopsided time signatures which eat their own tails.

The closest comparison would perhaps be to a less self-conscious Edie Brickell, but this only sells *Warm Robot* a few hundred miles short. The swaying inner rhythms of 'Querquehouse' and 'Claustrophobe' – not to mention the entranced insularity of 'All My Heads Meet' – construct a compelling, multifaceted world of their own. What a find.

Marco Rossi PAINTED AIR Come On 69

Green Cookie CD
www.greencookie.gr



Painted Air have been playing out of Hamburg for several years. There are no real standouts among the 12 songs here but almost all are driven

along by the confident Hammond playing of Cecile Musy – a real treat for Hammond fans and the major highlight. The overall approach is powerful '80s garage with some psych influences. Only on the penultimate track do things get a little slower and quieter.

Lead vocalist Brujah is adequate, but has a rather limited range that makes the heavier songs, like 'Drain Your Blood' and the title track sound solid rather than spectacular. Most effective are the songs with backing vocals, such as 'Restless Hedonist'.

Phil Suggitt

PAINTED HILLS Painted Hills

Birdsong CD
www.myspace.com/bolerobolero



Slept in the traditions of late '60s Sunset Strip folk-rock, early '70s Cosmic American Music and the early '80s Paisley Underground – not to mention boasting a CV whose tendrils seemingly touch every neo-psych band to come out of LA.