

The albums – good (👍), adequate (👎) and bad (👏) – which didn't get the full-length treatment, contributed individually by a selection of our various reviewers covering under the cloak of collective anonymity.

👍 **Various An Island Story: Biguine, Afro Latin & Musique Antillaise 1960–1972: Vol. One** (Strut STRUT187CD) Entrepreneur-bandleader Henri Debs founded Disques Debs in the late 1950s to record the créole music of Guadeloupe and Martinique. This excellent set is the first of three volumes compiling the label's best, featuring early big band meringue, gwò ka, biguine and bolero, with archival photos, interviews and discography. strut.bandcamp.com

👎 **Alba Griot Ensemble *The Darkness Between The Leaves*** (Riverboat TUGCD1113). Excruciatingly awful hippie-vocalled twaddle that attempts to spin the psych folk of the Pentangle/Fariñas era with a bit of ngon, kora etc. How on earth Toumani Diabaté got mixed up in this mess is anybody's guess, but the name Albarn is mentioned in the notes... worldmusic.net

👎 **Birds Of Chicago *Love In Wartime*** (Signature Sounds) Bittersweet country-soul-roots from collective built around the interpersonal chemistry of vocalists Allison Russell (Po' Girl) and Jeremy Lindsay (aka JT Nero). Original songs, shot through with a mellow, relaxed passion (though not without its rough edges) and rather tastily energised. birdsofchicago.com

Birds Of Chicago



👎 **Fisherman's Friends *Sole Mates*** (The Orchard) Latest offering from Cornwall's shanty crew is a mixed bag. Straight a cappella they're brilliant; instrumentation when used is tastily managed; and they strike a credible balance between musicality and tourist-friendliness – except when occasionally overdosing on silly "me-hearties" cod-theatricals. thefishermansfriends.com

👍 **Bob Pegg *The Last Wolf*** (Talking Elephant TECD401) About time someone resurrected this treasure. The last recorded work – to date – of the folk/rock genius that is Bob Pegg. Five-star OTT gothic-rooted 18 certificate ballads, include epic *The Last Dance*, in which the ghostly inhabitants of a drowned valley boogie on to Armageddon. Just brilliant, own it. talkingelephant.com

👎 **Various Artists *Luz De Luna: The Best Boleros From The Costa Chica*** (ARC Music EUCD2776). Fans of Alvaro Carrillo or Trío Los Panchos, who appeared in dozens of films during the golden age of Mexican cinema, will recognise the tender repertoire of Mexico's Pacific coast, as performed by Pedro Torres, Fidela Peláez, Chogo Prudente, Los Trea Amuzgos and Las Hermanas García. arcmusic.co.uk

👍 **Cecilia Zabala *The Color Of Silence*** (Acoustic Music 319.1582.2). Argentine singer-acoustic guitarist-composer Cecilia Zabala's work with Baden Powell and Jaques Morelenbaum, and evident immersion in Brazilian popular song and the music of Violeta Parra, make for a fresh and captivating solo art-song outing. cecilizabala.com.ar

👎 **Chancha Via Circuito *Bienaventuranza*** (Wonderwheel). Argentine Pedro Canale serves up a heterogeneous percussive mix of Andean folk, dancehall, beats and electronic effects, global rave with a spiritual bent, some gaita perhaps, but assertions of cumbia influence are notional at best.

👎 **Angelique Kidjo *Remain In Light*** (Kravenworks B07CZ4P3P7) Benin's Kidjo redoes (sorry, 'reimagines') Talking Heads' classic 1980 album in its entirety. And it really doesn't work. kidjo.com

👎 **James Duncan Mackenzie *Sròmos*** (James Duncan Mackenzie JMMCD002). Isle of Lewis flautist and bagpiper's second album contains entirely self-composed melodies and is a mellow jazzy take on the Highland tradition. Mackenzie's wooden flute and bagpipes are accompanied by drums, percussion, keyboards, guitars, bass, melodeon, banjo, mandolin and fiddle. jamesduncanmackenzie.com

👎 **Ntóni Denti d'Oro *Batuque & Finaçon*** (Ocora Radio France C561132). The Ntóni Denti d'Oro ensemble (voices, guitar, one-string cimboa fiddle, percussion) was the last proponent of the batuque and finaçon verbal-contest and praise-song genres of Cape Verde, as cultivated by descendants of those who escaped slavery. Recorded in 1997; illustrated notes in French and English. editions.radiofrance.fr

👎 **Géza Frank & Jean Damei *Event Horizon*** (Event Horizon 191924668138). Inspired by Irish/Scottish tradition, compositions by Géza Frank (whistles, uilleann-pipes) and Jean Damei (guitar) are immersed in electronic beats and soundscapes to create folk-infused electronic dance music. Fans of Asturian bagpiper Hevia or the Mike McGoldrick Band will enjoy this. eventhorizonproject.com

👎 **Bill Lloyd *Heavy Duty – Ballads Of The Unfree*** (Wildwood WILD CD 20171) A range of authentic and enterprisingly adapted songs that make a political point, presented by Cumbria-based singer and multi-instrumentalist. A worthwhile exercise, but Bill's instrumental proficiency is sometimes compromised by singing that's either strained or too literally heavy-duty. billlloyd.co.uk

👎 **Maimu Jõgeda *Pühendus*** (Maimu Jõgeda). Estonian piano-accordionist plays her own compositions with a reflective feel. While she studies folk music at the Estonian Academy, they don't show particularly Baltic roots, and are more part of a wider European folk-influenced music world. maimu.jogeda@gmail.com

👎 **Méabh & Tiarnán Smyth *Méabh & Tiarnán Smyth*** (Méagh & Tiarnán Smyth 191924562825). Méabh (fiddle) and Tiarnán (guitar, concertina, vocal) are a sibling duo from Co Armagh who perform traditional Irish reels, jigs, hop-jigs, hornpipes, barn-dance and slow ballad in a vigorous, rustic, old-timey style. Concludes with the beautiful slow air *Moran's Return*. cdbaby.com/cd/meabhmysmyth

👎 **Terence Blacker *Enough About Me*** (Talking Cat TCCD1801) Genially perceptive, sometimes quirky and offbeat, his songwriting takes as obvious role models Thackray and Lehrer, with splashes of contemporary awareness à-la-Baynham or Digance. Little to inspire a revisit after initial mildly amusing play through. terenceblacker.com

👎 **Little Jimmy Dickens *The Singles Collection 1949-62*** (Acrobat ADDCD3244). An early adopter of extravagantly fringed and rhinestoned stage garb, Dickens specialised in ultra-catchy schmaltz and novelty songs with titles like *Stinky Pass The Hat Around* and *When They Get Too Rough (They're Just Right For Me)*. Proper country! discovery-records.com

👎 **Joshua Burnell *Songs From The Seasons*** (Misted Valley MVR18A) York-based Joshua embarked on a year-long project to "arrange and digitally release a traditional song a week"; this CD gathers up just 10 of these (and four instrumental treatments). Thoughtful, respectful reimaginings, couched in old-school-brand folk-rock-meets-early-prog settings. joshuaburnell.com

👎 **The Salts *Brave*** (Braccan BRCD9001) Landlocked combo delivering a contemporary folk-pop slant to fresh rocking arrangements of salt-encrusted shanties and suchlike; they just about get away with it due to their brio, enthusiasm and energetic musicianship. But probably better as live entertainment than repeat listening. thesalts.co.uk

👎 **Alan Catton *Albion*** (Alan Catton) Collection of gentle (if somewhat samey) acoustic-based instrumental vignettes by guitarist from Hull outfit Beggar's Bridge. For the most part, inspired by his travels or historical episodes or legends. beggars-bridge.co.uk

👍 **Various Artists Resound: A Musical Tribute To Alan Surtees** (Shrewsbury Folk Festival) In tribute to Shrewsbury's recently-deceased Director, a compilation of choice tracks (including Surtees' personal favourites) from artists who have strong links with SFF. All profits to Alan Surtees Trust, to give grants to young/emerging musicians and new musical projects. shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk

👍 **Phil Hare A Stranger I Came** (March Hare MHPCD02) Respected guitarist and lyricist presents a typically all-encompassing trip for his seventh album. Unlikely to win Phil new admirers, but it's a convincing (if down-beat) set; basic, stylishly laid-back guitar-and-vox is enlivened with occasional banjo and dobro. phil-hare-guitarist.co.uk

👍 **Various Artists Cat Scratchin'** (Koko-Mojo KM-CD 10). *Ladies In The Groove* is the subtitle to this collection of mostly forgotten female performers who could give their male counterparts a run with their own brand of fun, funky and often wild R&B. 28 '50s and '60s tracks by 28 artists like Baby Joy Hamilton, Dimples Jackson, Mary Coleman (a voice to rival Big Mama Thornton's), and Peppy Prince. Ain't nothing shaking? Could have fooled me! koko-mojo.com

👍 **Blair Dunlop Notes From An Island** (Gilded Wings GWR005) Latest collection of songs brings an intelligent mix of socio-political comment and tender love songs, underpinned by his ever-impressive virtuoso guitar playing. Increasingly couched in a pop idiom rather than folk, though. blairdunlop.com

👍 **Per Gudmundson & Bengan Janson Hjelmtamós** (Country & Eastern CE39) Per Gudmundson (Frifot etc.) is one of Sweden's greatest fiddlers. Lovely tunes, from Orsa learned from the CD's dedicatee elder-great Björn Ståbi, and from Rättvik. Per's sweet-toned mastery blends perfectly with Bengan Janson's accordion, so sensitively empathic it sounds like another fiddle plus rich bass end. countryandeastern.se

👍 **Harmony Yemanya Eirllys** (Snowdrop) Snowdonia-based singer/musician and music-therapist Hilary Davies accompanies herself on guitar, violin, flute and piano on her fourth album, a collection of largely self-penned songs on themes of nature and loss. All on one level, however, so file under merely-pleasant. harmonymusica.co.uk

👍 **Sarah Bauhan Elmwood Station** (Whistler's Music WM9817) The clue's in the label – Sarah's a seasoned flautist/whistle player sharing her Celtic and New England roots with familiar musician friends. Her fifth recording, comprising traditional and original tunes and songs, forms an easy vehicle for her assured musicianship. sarahbauhan.com

👍 **Roger Pugh A Colourful Journey** (Oblong OBLCD079) A loosely concept-album charting Roger's journey through life, on which this English folk scene stalwart is supported by a cast of sixteen, including Pete Morton, Roger Wilson and Chris Conway. Catchy, well-constructed songs – what's not to like? roger-pugh.co.uk

👍 **Owen Ralph Chamber Folk (EP)** (Bin-norie BNCF001) Classically trained folk fiddler steers symphonic "big-band" (ten-piece) realisations of traditional songs and dance tunes, involving contemporary classical orchestration, electro-pop bleepings and vocals from Rosie Hood and Jim Causley. Disappointingly identikit though, and the "chamber-folk" label proves a misnomer. owenralph.co.uk

👍 **Grupo Mono Blanco ¡Fandango! Sonos Jarochos De Veracruz** (Smithsonian Folkways SFW CD 40575) Gilberto Gutiérrez and Grupo Mono Blanco are chiefly responsible for reviving the *son jarochos* and *fandango* traditions of Mexico's Veracruz state over the past four decades. The extensive, beautifully illustrated bilingual booklet tells the story behind the expertly rendered classic repertoire. folkways.si.edu



Steph Geremia

👍 **Steph Geremia Up She Flew** (Black Box Music BBM009) Second solo album from NY-born flautist and singer with Alan Kelly gang. Her eloquent flute shimmies through an affectionate homage to North Connaught styles. Lusciously floating vocals and spare accompaniments make for sublime listening – pretty great! stephgeremia.com

👍 **Borbély-Drescher Quartet Körbe-Körbe** (Fonó FA 406-2) Two modern saxophone masters compose a deliciously morose folk-inflected dream with enough finesse to suggest that they may one day gift us an ethno jazz Hungarian *Sketches Of Spain*. But they will have to first jettison the polished restraint and become less wary of their tremendous trad influences. fonohu

👍 **Magna Carta No Truth In The Rumour** (Talking Elephant. TECD395) A mix of original *No Truth* material with '79–'83 cuts from Spanish-only release *Sweet Deceiver*, this represents a fluid period in Magna history with a varied cast including Doug Morter, Tom McConville and Kate Robbins. Best slices, the pop roots of *Jigsaw Man* and Band-like title cut. talkingelephant.co.uk

👍 **Eliza Gilkyson Secularia** (Red House RHR CD 307) Gilkyson's been releasing albums for almost 50 years now, and this one keeps up the quality with guest spots from Shawn Colvin and the late Jimmy LaFave. There's a ton of passion on her words and her voice. elizagilkyson.com

👍 **Anne-Mari Kivimäki Ilja** (Nordic Notes NN107) The last of Kivimäki's five CDs based on the historical life of Karelian parish Suistamo. After 2015's electro-powerful *Suistamon Sähkö* it's largely acoustic, but as always unusual, energetic, melodeon-chugging and quirky. Field ambiances, dance tunes, group and solo songs, with Eero Grundström's harmonium, and Pekko Käppi's jouhikko, bass, drums, kanteles and fiddle. nordic-notes.de

👍 **Eliades Ochoa & Alejandro Almenares Dos Gigantes De La Música Cubana** (Tumi TUMI 251) Santiago natives Ochoa (guitar) and Almenares (requinto) unite for the first time on a lyrical, entirely instrumental rendition of 14 of the latter's original son and bolero son numbers, backed on *tres*, guitar, contrabass, violin, soprano sax, flute and percussion. tumimusic.com

👍 **Esszencia Produkción Elindultunk A Nagy Útra** (Fonó FA404-2) Any ensemble featuring Róbert Lakatos and Kálmán Balogh is always going to intrigue. But their aim of inimitably combining Bach, Bartók, jazz and the authentic folk music of the Carpathian Basin only fitfully struggles free of a drowsy fin de siècle Budapest cafe atmosphere. fonohu

👍 **Serious Child Empty Nest** (TCR Music TCRM75099) Soon after experiencing his first taste of songwriting at Boo Hewardine's workshop, Alan Young was encouraged to record an album of his own songs with Hewardine at the helm. Result: somewhat one-paced contemporary pop with a personal angle. seriouschild.com

👍 **Conor Caldwell To Belfast** (CC 01) An innovative homage to the Edward Bunting collection by prominent Belfast fiddler and member of Craobh Rua and Slow Moving Clouds. Mixing solo fiddle tracks with electronic loops, poetry and phased voicings but never sacrificing the melodic musical core. facebook.com/conorcaldwellmusic/

👍 **Sangre De Muerdago Noite** (Neuropa) Leipzig-based folk quartet injects some Gothic gravity into their Galician-flavoured tunage. By turn sweetly melodic and eminently rustic, it crosses Celtic and Medieval borders with a finely tuned sense of melody and style. sangredemuerdago.com

👍 **Jon Budworth We All Share The Same Sky** (Flying Folkie FF01CD) Bright-eyed, confident songwriting from Lancashire-born, now Yorkshire-based Jon, dealing with common themes in friendly, accommodating language and appealing arrangements. jonbudworth.co.uk

👍 **Duo Systrami När Isen Går** (Nordic Notes NN108) Elegant, airy and rich-toned fiddle/cello duets by twin sisters Fanny and Klara Kallström in innovative, strongly trad-rooted material focused on the landscapes of their home in Sweden's Ångermanland. There's a touch of their attractive singing too. nordic-notes.de

👍 **Sharon Lazibyrð Half Shame And Half Glory** (Trampoline TRL002) Debut full-length from Somerset-based s/s Sharon Martin explores (sometimes quite enigmatically) the ambiguities of life's journey through her pertinent, charmingly indie-pop-oriented compositions. Shades of Kirsty MacColl at times. sharonlazibyrð.co.uk

👍 **Estrella Acosta Mujeres De Luna: Songs By Cuban Women Composers** (eStar 134) Adequate Cuban American singer interprets 11 songs by nine Cuban women composers, a lushly orchestrated easy listening slough that masters such as Orlando "Maraca" Valle and Horacio "El Negro" Hernández cannot redeem. estrellaacosta.com

👍 **Very Be Careful Daisy's Beauty Salon** (Downtown Pijao/Steady Beat) Per this LA-based cumbia-vallenato band's promo sheet, "We rushed [into the studio] with no planning. The songs weren't finished and we did it on the spot." What this accordion-fronted dance music sounds like, indeed. Maybe lively party fare like this is better done live and undocumented. verybecareful.com

👍 **Jess Sah Bi & Peter One Our Garden Needs its Flowers** (Awesome Tapes From Africa) A re-release of a 1985 recording that was a huge regional hit in Cote d'Ivoire. A remarkable blend of country music with soaring West African vocal harmonies – strange but highly listenable! awesometapes.co.uk

👍 **Kardemimmit Kesayön Valo – Midnight Sun** (Kardemimmit KARCD-002) Interesting, unusual melodies, mostly their own, to largely trad lyrics, by light-voiced, attractively harmonising Finnish quartet. Self-accompanied on their four silkily chiming 15- and 38-stringed kanteles, their fifth album is their most engaging yet. kardemimmit.fi



👍 **Svjata Vatra Muutused/Zminy** (Nordic Notes NN113) "Cossack Viking Folk Rock" apparently, and it starts with all the husky hysteria one might expect. But sweeping trombone and woodwind then leaven the "ancient pagan rite of the Holy Fire", and a thoroughly enjoyable romp through the traditional music of Ukraine and the Baltic countries results. svjativatra.com

👍 **Various Vol.5 – Folk From Estonia** (Nordic Notes NN110) Compilation of Estonian folk from its own and other releases by prolific German licensing label. A useful window on some of today's growing Estonian roots scene. nordic-notes.de

👍 **Elina Duni Partir** (ECM 2587) Tirana-born Duni's serene voice floats over her own sparse accompaniments on guitar, piano or frame drum in songs of love, loss and leaving – half from songwriters including herself, half traditional – in Albanian, Portuguese, Italian, Arabic, Armenian, Hebrew, French, German and English. ecmrecords.com

👍 **Enkel We Are Enkel** (Nordic Notes NN112) Four Finnish female singers on melodeons, kantele and viola in largely trad songs and tunes. They're most musically promising when they move past the ambitious crowd-pleasing energy implied by the garish "superhero gang" cover, delivered within, into wittier subtlety. nordic-notes.de

👍 **Matti Kallio Waltz For Better Times** (Own label, MATKA1) Finnish button-chromatic accordionist, ex-Värttinä, in ten of his own compositions, accompanied by the ever-skillful duo of Petri Hakala (mandolin, guitar, mandocello) and double-bassist Hannu Rantanen, with Maria Kalaniemi guesting on one track. Able but undistinctive. mattikallio.com

👍 **Eamon O'Leary All Souls** (Reveal 076CD) One-third of Alt and worthwhile singer/strings player makes self-penned solo set with Jefferson Hamer on board. Lyrically based within the ballad genre the results are quietly invigorating and descriptively sound. Lyrical dexterity and musical nous combine for a quietly uplifting set. eamonoleary.net

👍 **Sangre De Muerdago Noite** (Own Label) Medieval-sounding pan-Celtic sounds from Spanish outfit with Galician connections. Thoughtful melodic improvisational work and sparse yet effective arrangements display their instrumental virtuosity. Hints of dark folk and neo folk and an underlying subtlety overcome any self-indulgence. sangredemuerdago.bandcamp.com

👍 **Saor Patrol Battle Of Kings** (Arc Music. EUCD2788) Lord save us from blokes with ZZ Top beards, thrash guitars, far too many drums and bagpipes howling a stack of tunes which all sound like a close variant on the first one. The results are frightening! They call it Celtic rock... saorpatrol.com

👍 **Raintown Seers The Mermaid's Pool & Other Stories** (Raintown Seers) A Derbyshire (High Peak) trio whose latest CD is a pleasing and well-presented collection focusing mainly on local themes and stories. Plenty of lively interest, but melodies could be stronger. facebook.com/RaintownSeersUK

👍 **Lander Mason Stand Together** (Lander Mason LAMA009) Sixth studio album from versatile multi-instrumentalists Fiona Lander and Paul Mason plays to their Northumbrian roots while also proving their developing song-craft. Though leaning more towards lighter jazzy-folk than previous sets, it retains the duo's trademark accessibility and accomplishment. landermason.com

👍 **Leather'o Six (EP)** (Leather'o) York-based alt-Celtic six-piece present six tracks of sometimes Gypsy-influenced folk-rock: a crowd-pleasing and often potent mix. A valiant attempt to replicate the impact of the band's popular stage act in an "as-live" studio situation. yorkcelticband.co.uk

👍 **The Humblebums Please Sing A Song For Us** (Talking Elephant TECD400) Celebrating that unlikely pairing of Gerry Rafferty and Billy Connolly, this double CD anthology brings together studio albums and bonus tracks. It's not too difficult to see from this how both Rafferty's and Connolly's equally distinctive performance styles emerged. talkingelephant.co.uk

👍 **Tormis Quartet Tormisele – Hommage To Veljo Tormis** (Nordic Notes NN114) Two female voices, two electric guitarists, in versions of late Estonian composer Tormis's compositions. After the terminally irritating scating opener it has more sincere-seeming moments, but appears more concerned with the musicians' undoubted cleverness than the meaning of the material. nordic-notes.de

👍 **Moonrakers Tides** (Moonrakers) Fifth album from this revitalised veteran Oxfordshire combo brings gentle textures, careful arrangements and harmonies to a pleasing mix of traditional items and compositions by band members Jon Bennett and Sarah Fell. Proficient and appealing, if maybe a touch "safe". moonrakers.net

👍 **Juuri & Juuri Korpin Marssi – The Raven's March** (Nordic Notes NN115) Another fine set of quirky arrangements of trad Finnish tunes with oft-maniac spirit and graunch, and two songs, from Emilia Lajunen and Eero Grundström on fiddle/nyckelharpa and harmonium/harmonica. Lajunen is one of Finland's most capable fiddlers, Sväng's Grundström unique in his flying-fingers harmonium pumping. nordic-notes.de

👍 **Issam Rafea & Gao Hong Life As Is** (Innova 997) Twelve tracks of improvisations on oud and pipa, Rafea and Hong never having played together before. The sonorous oud contrasts well with the percussive, twittery pipa, and the interplay and empathy of the players are clear – true fusion music. innova.mu

👍 **Various Artists Got The Blues** (Universal Music On Demand 5379526) A four-CD set boasting "80 All Time Classics"... well yes... and no. The music is all good but there's a number of tracks, like the string-laden ballads *I Can't Stop Loving You* and *We'll Be Together Again* sung by Ray Charles, the folksy *If It's Monday* by Lee Hazelwood, and rock anthem *The Pusher* from Steppenwolf, that sure ain't the blues! But considering the range and scope and amount of real blues selected, this budget-price set offers good value for money.

👍 **Stuart Masters Union Chapel & Elsewhere** (Hi4Head HFHCD024) Very impressive guitar work on debut album: Eastern, jazz, baroque and minimalist stylings all feature, along with covers of Renbourn and Hedges. Also laudable is the brevity of the pieces: no padding here. One to watch. hi4headrecords.com

👍 **Coda Train Of Spirits** (Coda) Second album from a Co. Mayo-based septet with a pronounced vocal bent. Instrumentation is added to the close harmonies and Donal Lunny's pristine production adds extra lustre. Subtlety, poise and solid material impress. codasinging.com

👍 **The Fonsecas Where The River Meets The Sea** (Village Sunsets VS009) Curious stylistic mix, basically Scots folk up against everything else. I'm all for eclecticism but the best here is the reggae folk criss cross. Elsewhere things get more rootsy and obvious. thefonsecas.co.uk

👍 **Steve Wharton Lake District Songs & Poems** (Own label) Storyteller, songwriter and singer from Cumbria sets out his wares and good they are too. Passion and commitment by the bucketful. A cross between Harry Boardman and Tymon Dogg. I kid you not! Deserves to be heard outside of Cumbria. cumbriansongs.co.uk

👍 **Preston-Wild Along The Way** (Preston Music 191824818656) From Chicago, Colleen Wild sings and Timothy Preston plays all of the instruments. They have written all the songs. Clever, but there is just nothing that stands out. This is the sort of record the perpetrators have to release themselves. timothyjprestonmusic.com

👍 **Calan Deg / 10** (Sain SAIN SCD2790) Calan's innovative, extrovert take on Welsh traditional music reflects influences from pop, jazz and Brittany. This 10th anniversary compilation includes tracks from four albums plus three new songs, showcasing their sound palette of vocals, fiddles, pipes, whistle, accordion, piano, guitar and harp. sainwales.com

Calan





👉 **Amparanoia *El Coro Di Mi Gente*** (La Marmita/Calaverita 5425021010169) Great Spanish singer Amparo Sanchez has reformed her festival favourite band and re-recorded their debut album from 20 years ago. These new versions are fine, but don't really add much to the originals. Not quite sure what the point of it is. amparanoia.com

👉 **Caesar Pacifici & Brian Brooks *In Good Company*** (Own label) Top-quality musicians blend blues, American music and traditional Irish music with varying degrees of success. Unlike the best of Sweeney's Men or the Transatlantic Sessions, it's not a clean hybrid but enjoyable nevertheless. pacificiandbrooks.com

👉 **Andrew Mill & Friends *Wandering Albatross*** (Brechin All CDBAR032) When you get over the schizophrenic effect of heavy, four-square Scottish vocals over lively, accomplished country backings, there are good and sometimes very funny words. A bit of an acquired taste. brechin-all-records.com

👉 **Lonesome George *Flat As The Earth*** (Red Box) A set of original songs played over flute-led quartet who offer rhythmic, textured accompaniment to quite weak songs. Sadly music that fails to command attention. facebook.com/LonesomeGeorgeBand.

👉 **Dresch Vonós Quartet *Forrásból*** (Fonó FA 400-2) Another day, another Mihály Dresch group. While the self-indulgences of his latest project are arresting, and the musicianship exemplary, there's nothing new in its polished improvisatory sketches of jazz sensibilities allied to traditional music. fono.hu

👉 **Theresa Kavanagh *An Choil Uaigneach - The Lonesome Forest*** (TK 2017) Donegal fiddler and composer's music resounds in its sense of place and geographical location. Stylistically redolent of Tommy Peoples and Mairead Ni Maoinaigh, and possessed of a nimble compositional bent. Subtle jazz elements add extra intrigue – recommended. theresakavanaghmusic.com

👉 **Jennifer Bell & Wilson Walker *And So To Bedlam*** (JBW001) Bell is a singer-songwriter influenced by traditional English folk. Her gentle vocal style and melodies draw comparisons with Vashti Bunyan and the partnership with Walker also brings some inventive fiddle alongside her lute and 12-string guitar. jenniferbellsongwriter.com

👉 **Boxing Banjo *Round No 1*** (BBCD 001 0 723172 472306) Four young Irish musicians on box, banjo, fiddle and guitar, who play superbly well-performed and constructed sets of tunes. Whoever told them it was a good idea to add the two songs should be punished. boxingbanjo.com

👉 **Various *Sweden Norway - Norrspe*** (Ocora Radio France C 560260) Sixteen tracks from Swedish fiddlers Kjell-Erik Eriksson and Jon Holmén and nyckelharper Magnus Holmström, twelve from Norwegian hardanger Sunnmøre-tradition fiddlers Leikny Aasen and Vidar Underseth. Top players, fine material, well-recorded solo, duet or trio, but an odd album in trying to cover both countries, each with many traditions. editions.radiofrance.fr

👉 **Clannad *Turas 1980*** (MIG Music MIG02092) Double album of a recently discovered live performance in Germany, recorded (but never broadcast) by Radio Bremen. An evocative reminder of just how good the all-acoustic Gaelic five-piece were before the synthesisers arrived and everything went Bono-shaped. mig-music.de

👉 **Aeyther *Into The Forest (Unplugged)*** (Aeyther) Not sure what's going on here, the tag is alternative folk and classical but really it's just a hotch potch of unrelated influences that sound like they're still in the blender. Rethink! aeytherbookings@gmail.com

👉 **Brigid Mae Power *The Two Worlds*** (Tompkins Square TSQ5487) Irish songwriter's second utilises relentless acoustic riffs, hypnotic drones, melodic piano and a hugely impressive and emotive vocal range in a superior collection of songs of soul-searching, sadness, separation and self-assertion. A sometimes challenging but always compelling record. brigidmaepower.com

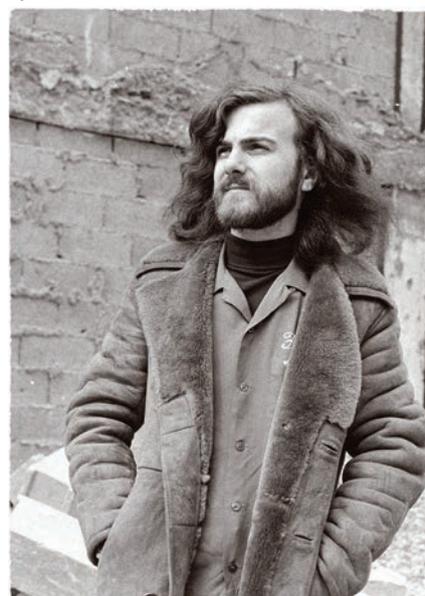
👉 **Rab Noakes *Welcome To Anniversaryville*** (Neon NEONCD021) Rab sings favourite original and traditional songs from his 50-year career. Influences include Buddy Holly, Dylan, and the 1960s Scottish folk scene. Kathleen MacInnes provides superb, smoky lead vocals on *Tennessee Waltz* and *Pity The Poor Immigrant*, plus haunting harmony vocals throughout. rabnoakes.com

👉 **Reverend Raven & The Chain *Smokin' Alter Boys My Life*** (Nevermore) Something of an institution in the state of Wisconsin and it's easy to hear why. Sixteen tracks, selected and remixed to celebrate the band's 20 years of bluesin' and groovin'. With the Rev's strong vocals and tasty guitar licks, blasting harmonica and rock-solid rhythm section, it cooks! reverendraven.com

👉 **Zakir Hussain *The Rough Guide to Zakir Hussain*** (Rough Guides RGNET 1372CD) An attempt to put the tabla player in traditional context, duetting with musicians that include Shivkumar Sharma (santoor), Vilayat Khan (sitar), Sultan Khan (sarangi) and his renowned father and tabla guru Alla Rakha. Compiled by Ken Hunt. All licensed from Saregama. worldmusic.net

👉 **Kyriakos Sfetsas *Greek Fusion Orchestra Vol. 1*** (Teranga Beat TBDC 022) Traditional flutes and clarinets meet jazz horns and piano, while melancholic folk melodies merge with galloping funk grooves and prog dynamics. Complex arrangements performed with dazzling virtuosity and just the right amount of 1970s long-haired and wide-flared preposterousness. terangabeat.bandcamp.com

Kyriakos Sfetsas



👉 **Amorroma *Moment In Time*** (Appel APR1385) The Belgian group move their repertoire away from traditional European folk-dance music to the songs and tunes of their flautist Jowan Merckx at the same time as broadening their accompaniments to encompass a range of other musical genres. Despite the engaging voice of Elly Aerden this does give them a middle-of-the-road sound. denappel.be

👉 **Stuart Forester *The Good Earth*** (Melonstone MLNR002) Worthy second offering from Forester, now relocated to rural Aberdeenshire, but that doesn't mean he's gone all rustic, as *Red Brick Ballads* or *London Pride* prove: such sentiments as change and belonging are universal. Decent backing from sympathetic mates such as Johnny Hardie and Carol Anderson enhance an album of self-written folkery. stuartforester.com

👉 **Gemma Khawaja *Caelum Scalptorium*** (own label) Defiantly home-made and quirkily-packaged release from a striking singer whose expansive pacing and clear traveller influences stand at the opposite pole to Millennial Blandfolk. Mostly English trad songs receive quasi-mystical arrangements with sparsely picked guitar or electronic ambient sounds (Phoebe Smith meets Brian Eno?). gemmaKhawaja.bandcamp.com

👉 **Katie Lou McCabe *The Golden Green*** (own label) Yorkshire-based recording debutant's three-track EP rises from the singer-songwriter morass with languorous vocals, sparse piano, a delicate and dextrously picked Telecaster and adroit lyricism. She's also a film maker, an artist, a dreamer and one to watch. katieloumccabe.com

👉 **Ravi Shankar *The Rough Guide To Ravi Shankar*** (Rough Guides RGNET1371CD) This new album (it isn't the identically titled 2008 release) provides an accessible introduction to the evolution of the great sitarist's recordings, with Tilak Shyam featuring in both 78 and LP-length versions. Expertly compiled and noted by Ken Hunt. worldmusic.net

👉 **The Staples Singers *The Staples Singers Collection*** (Acrobat ACTRCD9073) Early singles and album tracks on bargain triple CD of sanctified soul-stirrers. When Mavis sings *I'm Coming Home* over Roebuck's sparse electric guitar, I'm dancing before the LORD with all my might, girded with a linen ephod. Criekey Moses! acrobatmusic.net

👉 **Simon Cousins *The Lark And The Blackbird*** (SCOU3) Former Ophiuchus man returns with a laid-back collection of originals, trad:ars and covers. Nice enough – though songs already seared into the consciousness by Mike Waterson, Maddy Prior and Sandy Denny require something more substantial than being nice enough. sicusins.co.uk

👉 **Afrikana Soul Sister** (Musicaction) Canadian producer and band mix trad African rhythms and vocals with electronics and techno to engaging, if not entirely original effect. Some interesting moments and a couple of standout tracks. afrikanasoulsister.com/

👉 **Fine Lines *Forget About You*** (Parade PARCD008) Expansive and wide-screen roots rock from Cheshire duo making sizable waves where ever they play. This rolls and twists in equal measure, two tracks from their debut album and two previously unheard, produced by the genius of John Kettle. wearefinelines.com

👉 **Fred Guichen *Dor An Enez*** (Paker Prod CD 025) Breton diatonic accordionist's richly atmospheric album of compositions includes delirious whirling waltzes, wistfully evocative pieces, and thrilling, darkly up-tempo Breton traditional dances performed with top-flight musicians on flute, guitars, violins, bombards, binou, uilleann pipes, bouzouki, banjo and mandolin. pakerprod.bzh