

seventh album, it is not difficult to appreciate why Jaime Michaels has built up a loyal following. There is nothing harsh or abrasive about his voice; on the contrary, there is a smoothness and warmth in the way in which he delivers his songs which is very appealing. As a writer Michaels is poetic, using interesting imagery. For the most part his lyrics are non controversial and he avoids writing about dimly lit bars, drowning one's sorrows in booze, cheating and many of the accepted ingredients considered to be essential in so many country songs. His avoidance of these subjects, however, does not mean that his lyrics are bland or insipid. In *A Momentary Thing* he gives us snapshots of his progress through life, from the acceptance of the expectations of adults during boyhood, through to his search for freedom as a teenager and then his own acceptance of the ways of the world in adulthood. He recalls his boyhood again on *Red Western Flyer*, a rusty old bike which he named Delores—which he treasured. Many years later, in adulthood, he sees a brand new Delores in a shop window and cannot resist buying it and reliving his boyhood adventures. The theme of boyhood is revisited in *Surrender*, as Michaels recalls the dreariness of the small town in which he grew up, but even here, his depiction of the town is absorbingly vivid. He turns to four other writers for material, Chad Elliott for *Minnesota*, Amelia Spicer for *Shine*, David Glaser, who contributed *Concrete River*, a road song and *Gravedigger's Boy*, an interesting portrait of a young man who, because of his trade, is largely avoided by everyone.

Another aspect of this recording which holds a lot of appeal lies in the instrumentation. Michaels plays acoustic guitar and he is joined on some tracks by Andrew Hardin whose subtle playing is highly commendable. Michaels also favours the accordion and this features prominently on a number of tracks, played mainly by Joel Guzman while Chris Gage takes over the instrument on the title track. The banjo plays a major role on the droll *Me And The Cat*, with the tin whistle coming to the fore on *Red Western Flyer*. Also featured on some tracks are mandolin, upright bass and percussion; but producer, Jono Manson has ensured that the instrumentation always acts as a vehicle for Michael's voice and at no point does it swamp it. Also worthy of a special mention is Larkin Gayl whose harmony vocals go a long way in enhancing those of Michaels.

In summary, a pleasing collection of original songs by an artist with a warm, gentle voice, and a handful of highly proficient musicians, which should appeal to those who are weary of being bludgeoned with the formulaic mainstream music to which they are subjected by DJs who, in all likelihood, would not consider including Jaime Michaels' style in their mix of music. **LK** www.jaimemichaels.com

John Arthur Martinez
PURGATORY ROAD

Apache Ranch Records-ARR1748
★★★★

A voice that takes you back to the country crooners of the 1960s

Texas resident John Arthur Martinez came second ahead of Miranda Lambert on American TV's Nashville Star in 2003, and he also co-wrote *Seguro Que Hell Yes* on Flaco Jimenez's self-titled 1994 album that went on to win a Grammy. His silky smooth and very rich voice is just a pleasure to listen to, whether singing the pulsating *Purgatory Road* with driving guitar solos alongside fiddle and powerful backing vocals that would not have sounded out of place on a Garth Brooks album, or the gorgeous *Que No Puede Ver* (the one who got away) on which he alternates between English and Spanish his voice is just so relaxing. Make yourself a large Latte, put this CD in your player, sit back in your chair and just relax. **DK** www.johnarthurmartinez.net



Jon Sinnott
GIVING UP THE GHOST

Self released
★★★★

Very good album release from this promising young singer-songwriter

Bristol based Jon Sinnott impressed me when I saw him as a support act to the mighty Band Of Heathens in Bedford, and I am also highly impressed with his new self-released CD. The album starts with the musically very catchy and quite upbeat *Arm n Arm* on which Jon's quite infectious vocals are supported by some punchy piano notes from Dan Moore. He also proves his vocal class on the lyrically quite sad *Giving Up The Ghost* on which the tempo increases to a quite exciting finale.

Jon has a very easy and smooth vocal style that makes his music very palatable. His unique style of Americana mixes alt.country and folk with a pop foundation that would make most of his music easily crossover-able to the pop radio stations, and could be played quite comfortably alongside artists such as James Morrison, although the quite exceptional track *The Wheel* that closes the CD out had me thinking more of a young Bob Dylan. This album is a terrific introduction to a very talented young singer-songwriter from the UK. **DK** www.myspace.com/jonsinnott



Maggie Reilly
LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

Red Berry Records-RBR0006
★★★☆☆

Fine collection of re-recordings by one of Scotland's finest singers

Maggie Reilly first came to prominence as a member of the band



Cado Belle in the 1970s, but it was her musical involvement with Mike Oldfield in the 1980s and especially the hit single *Moonlight Shadow* that catapulted her name into the limelight. That song is featured on this album and again highlights her sweet and pure voice on this gorgeous tune. Other Oldfield tracks included are the jaunty *To France* and the forceful *Family Man* that Reilly also had a hand in as a co-writer.

The wonderful *Lilith* shows off Maggie's powerful but at times haunting vocals perfectly, and she co-wrote this with her musical partner of over 30 years Stuart MacKillop who plays some fine piano and keyboards throughout the album, *Lilith* also includes a fine guitar solo from Hugh Burns that sees the song out. *True Colours* came over a little weak, but then I have never heard a version that has been able to top the excellent hit version by the wonderfully colourful Cyndi Lauper. That aside, this is a very good album. **DK** www.maggiereilly.co.uk

Michael Jerling
MUSIC HERE TONIGHT

Fool's Hill Music
★★★★

Talented Saratoga Springs singer-songwriter reprises highlights from his catalogue at Caffé Lena

The sub-title of this album is LIVE AT CAFFE LENA. If you are well-versed in the geography of folk listening rooms Stateside, you'll be well aware that Caffé Lena, America's oldest continuously operating folk coffeehouse, is located in the upstate New York city of Saratoga Springs. It was founded in 1960 by



the late Lena Spencer (who died in 1989). The Springs has been home to Illinois born Jerling for a couple of decades. In the early 1980s, based in New York City, Michael performed in Greenwich Village clubs and was part of the Fast Folk co-operative. Early the following decade, along with Richard Shindell, Jerling was one of the New Voices, New Visions quartet of folk performers signed by Shanachie Records. In 1993 Jerling won Kerrville's New Folk Songwriting contest.

In a recording career spanning three decades and eight previous releases, **MUSIC HERE TONIGHT** is his first live album. Recorded at Caffé Lena on June 30 this year, Michael is supported by his decades long collaborator/co-producer Tony Markellis (fretless acoustic bass, harmony vocals) and Mrs. Jerling—Teresina Huxtable (reed organ, accordion, percussion, harmony vocal). *Wide Awake In Parsippany* is the humorous recollection of a bad New Jersey motel experience. Equally rib-tickling is the later, slyly worded offering *In The Middle Ages*—'If you need a vacation go on a crusade' and 'Healthcare was holistic, the food was organic, A few little maggots didn't cause a panic.' Where the latter lyric reinterprets historical fact, in the ensuing *Old Stones* a citizen of the New World visits the Old World and observes its ancient buildings and young women 'Dressed up like their favourite pop stars.'

Built around an up-tempo rockabilly rhythm, *Jimmy & Jerry Lee* focuses on the real life 'Son of the devil, Son of the Lord.' As well as accompanying his voice with six and twelve-string guitar, Michael is also an adept mandolin picker. Supporting his vocal with the latter instrument, *Old Henry's House* recalls

Chris Jones & the Night Drivers
CLOUD OF DUST

GSM Records 102
★★★★

Jones sings with a solid country twang while his songs are splashed with rootsy country and bluegrass music

Best known for his work in the bluegrass world, Chris Jones has garnered attention for his distinctive voice and insightful songwriting, which supersedes the traditional bluegrass genre. As a solo artist, Chris was signed to California's Little Dog Records, and worked with country-rock producer Pete Anderson. Now for the first time in several years he is back working with a full bluegrass band and the result is this stunning album that has both stirring originals, superb picking and vibrant, powerful singing from Jones, whose compositions reveal one foot in traditional country and the other in traditional bluegrass.

The Night Drivers—Ned Luberecki (banjo, harmony vocals), Jon Weisberger (bass, harmony vocals), Mark Stoffel (mandolin) and Aaron Till (fiddle, harmony vocals)—are augmented by guests Darrin Vincent, Sally Jones, Jeremy Garrett, Mike Witcher, Megan Lynch and Shawn Lane. Highlights are many, but include the heartbreaking *Cold Lonesome Night* which features embellishments of fiddle, mandolin and Dobro, *Come On Little Children*, bolstered by beautiful gospel harmonies, and a neat rendition of Johnny Duncan's *I'd Rather Love You*, which Charley Pride took to the top of the country charts in 1971. There are also a couple of bonus tracks—*Cowboys Ain't Supposed To Cry* and *Pretty Saro*—recorded several years ago for Rebel Records but currently unavailable. The former features Ron Block, Rob Ickes, Dan Tyminski, Sally Jones and Darrin Vincent, whilst *Pretty Saro* has just Tim O'Brien's plaintive fiddle.

Chris Jones possesses something that money can't buy. It is the ability to sing a song and make you have a reaction. For me that reaction is most often chills. He has a soulfulness that is unbelievable. Seek this out—you will not be disappointed. **AC** www.chrisjonesmusic.com

