

Steve Hackett
Out Of The Tunnel's Mouth

(Wolfworks)



'The best album ever crafted in a Twickenham living room since the Stones set fire to the Station Hotel,' jokes Hackett, and the quality of the recording is such that he must have modelled his living room on Abbey Road. The tunes and playing aren't too shabby, either. The ex-Genesis man takes a whirlwind tour around the musical world (prog, blues, classical, flamenco) and it's a sonic adventure well worth the price of the ticket.

John Fogerty
The Blue Ridge Rangers Rides Again

(UMTV)



This album finds Fogerty resurrecting the mythical band he created for his '73 solo debut after Creedence Clearwater Revival. As ever, Fogerty evokes a vivid state of Americana via the kind of roots/country guitar playing that seems so easy to do but is so hard to get right, and his duet with Springsteen on the Everly Brothers' *When Will I Be Loved* is one of many highlights.

Nine Below Zero
It's Never Too Late!

(Zed)

No one who has seen the high-octane Brit bluesers live has ever doubted their ability to move the crowd, but this album of new



material certainly accesses that concert power more than ever before. Dennis Greaves employs his '62 Stratocaster to fine effect on *Mechanic Man*, while *Breakin' Down* proves he's equally adept at handling a Gibson ES-335. With a bit of luck *It's Never Too Late!* will give Nine Below Zero the plaudits they deserve.

Gov't Mule
By A Thread

(Provogue)



What do you do when you're a legendary rock band who could play their greatest hits and trouser the cash without many complaining? Well, if you're Warren Haynes and his crew, you forget all that and concentrate on making a feisty new record instead. *By A Thread* has a belching bottom end provided by new bassist Jorgen Carlsson and is stuffed full of growling riffs and laser-guided lead lines that remind you of past glories without ever wallowing in them.

Katy Lied
Echo Games

(Weatherbox)



If you're partial to roots-infused rock with high'n'mighty chorus hooks then you're in for a treat

with Katy Lied's second album. New vocalist Katie Harnett adds a good deal of class to the proceedings, as do guest appearances by Thea Gilmore and the rightly-lauded pedal steel player Al Perkins. An uplifting record that's perfect for humming and air-strumming along.

Wolfmother
Cosmic Egg

(Island)



If Sabbath had pursued that vital pop sensibility heard on *Paranoid* they may well have made an album that sounded like *Cosmic Egg* - but they didn't. The riffage is bombastic, the hooks are sharp, and snide critics who dubbed them mere copyists have been righteously ignored. Unapologetic '70s style rock re-imagined for a new generation who want it heavy, yet catchy.

Spiral Stairs
The Real Feel

(Domino)



Quirky indie pop heroes Pavement imploded 10 years ago leaving Scott Kannberg, aka Spiral Stairs, to hone his songs - and on this evidence he's set to eclipse his more famous ex-bandmate Stephen Malkmus. The atmospheric balladry retains a Lou Reed edge, but graceful steel guitar licks smooth over the barbs. Scuzzy lilting power pop is still the theme, but Mr Stairs is a maturing talent.

Snap Judgements

Devendra Banhart
What Will Be

(Warners)

Soothing Latin rhythms ease these beautiful folk melodies into your consciousness so subtly, it's almost a surprise when you realise you're completely hooked. Bert Jansch guests on guitar and backing vocals.

Beggar Joe
Beggar Joe

(CAT Records)

Armed with smouldering vocals, smart acoustic-driven fingerstyle accompaniment and an dynamic bluesy groove, this Manchester five-piece deliver on all counts.

Chris Scruggs
Anthem

(Cogent Records)

Born of true country music aristocracy, young Chris Scruggs is a mean guitar player. These bright, twangy workouts swing with real country punk panache.

Heavy Trash
Midnight Soul Serenade

(Bronzerat)

The Blues Explosion's Jon Spencer joined up with wild rockabilly throwback Matt Verta-Ray a while back and finally they've hit the spot. Raucous slabback riffs slice to the bone, with abrasive off-kilter tunes to match.

Kill It Kid
Kill It Kid

(One Little Indian)

This combo's fresh faces belie the raw, ragged rock'n'roll hoedowns they can deliver. Delta blues meets film noir ambience? Well, it gets our vote.

Malcolm Holcombe
For The Mission Baby

(Echo Mountain)

Full of growling vocals and thumbtack-sharp guitar picking, Holcombe's latest is a winning combination of dark charm, twang and swing that's hard to ignore.

The Reverend Horton Heat
Laughing And Crying With The Reverend Horton Heat

(Yep Roc)

These Texas-fried paeans to life's trials and tribulations are propelled by some smokin' lead guitar and will keep you jivin', gigglin' and bawlin' long and hard.

John Alexander
Rain For Sale

(Hot Lemon Music)

Alexander puts his virtuoso skills on slide and acoustic guitar to fine use on this collection of tunes that will create a righteous dustbowl around your stereo.