

that sometimes comes close to mawkishness. *Grandpa's Little Girl* and *Everybody Wants (What We Got)* come close to saccharine sentimentality, but Roth's rigour in his writing keeps them from tumbling into a syrupy abyss, but he finally oversteps the line on the icky, romantic declarations on the final track *Candle Song*.

Roth's sentimental approach is perfect for the poetically ambiguous lyric of *Songbird Sings*, the sad tale of a Cherokee Native American named Diana Jones (written by Jonathan Byrd) and *Long Haul*, the Effron White song of a terminally ill trucker. Roth is less successful on Kris Kristofferson's *Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down*, where he fails to capture the harsh melancholy of the song.

In contrast, Roth also has a penchant for jolly, up-tempo, retro songs. *Candy Cane* is an enjoyable country blues and he also has a penchant for songs with a jugband flavour, but with Tom Pattock's tuba in place of a jug. The Elam Blackman song *If We Keep Kissin'* is gloriously over the top, *Waitress In A White Dress* has shades of Tom Waits, but *Mornin' Coffee* is ponderous and one rasping tuba song too many.

Charlie Roth covers a broad range of styles and I could even picture *You Won't Talk About Love* as a boy-band ballad. He is a little uncertain when he moves out of his comfort zone of warm sentimentality, but there are some terrific moments and the title track is a potential classic.

Michael Hingston

LUCY BILLINGS No Other Road

★★★★★



Let's Not And Say We Did / As We Fly / Rear View Mirror

/ Daddy's Last Drive / Blue Highway / From The Bottom Looking Down / Goodbye Baby / My Caballo / Crossword / You Make It Easy / The Gift / Leavin' You

Producer: John Jennings
Sassy Time Records
55.49

These days there are many singers in the country / folk / singer-songwriter camp. We seem swamped, and whilst there are some talented singers, many now seem almost anonymous. However, Lucy Billings is good news. The singer, a California licensing lawyer, grew up in Arizona, jumping over cactus. When aged only nine her parents bought her a guitar. She released her debut in 2006, and now, for her second, she has secured the services of John Jennings (who has worked with Mary Chapin Carpenter) to produce, and he has done a stunning job. The sound mix is wonderful, one of the very best of recent years.

The disc kicks off with, *Let's Not And Say We Did*, a bluesy feeling track complete with fiddles and a banjo break. When Lucy Billings' crystal clear voice kicked in I thought this might be a special disc. As she moves onto *As We Fly*, with a short piano intro, it moves into a gentle folksy song which gains speed and has a strong melody. 25 years ago this would probably have been the second 7 inch vinyl single from the album. *Rear View Mirror* is the most ambitious, at six minutes, it's a song about a girl who loses her job. Ultimately it's a song about change.

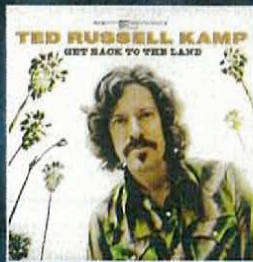
All through this album are some wonderful lyrics. On *Rear View Mirror*, we have, "time to leave doubts in the rear view mirror". Deeply moving is the tale of the death of the singers father. It's called, *Daddy's Last Drive*. The man in the car has a heart attack. Even after his death, the car travels on, coming to rest in a beautiful meadow. It is another with a strong melody. *Blue Highway* is a slower acoustic ballad about "finding your own way". *From The Bottom Looking Down*, with more piano, reminded me of Carly Simon and Joan Baez,

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Rachel Harrington Celilo Falls Continental Songs

Originals, traditionals and new songs, loosely based on old songs, all come with Rachel's open eye for all those things in life that (could) happen to all of us

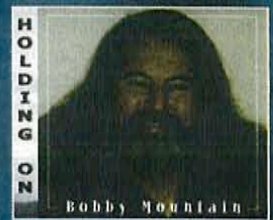


Ted Russell Kamp Get Back To The Land POMO Records

Solo record from Shooter Jennings' bass player and songwriter is a juicy gumbo of California country and blue eyed soul in the style of lifelong inspirations J.J. Cale, Kris Kristofferson and The Band

Bobby Mountain Holding On BSW Records

Bobby's new CD *Holding On* brings traditional country back. A collection of life experiences, highs and lows... this is real music for hard times

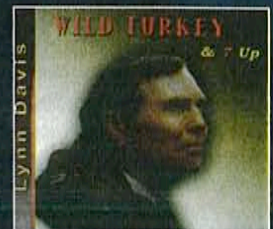


Hannah McNeil Hannah McNeil BSW Records

A contemporary country singer with a stunning, versatile voice that swings beautifully between tender stories, power ballads and rock. Hooky melodies with relatable lyrics

Lynn Davis Wild Turkey and 7 Up BSW Records

Wild Turkey & 7 Up is proving to be a real success on the European Country Music Charts and is putting Davis on the international map



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and on the evidence of this CD Lucy Billings has similar talent to those singers.

The next track is a small surprise, a very strong traditional country track, *Goodbye Baby* [with Lloyd Maines weeping steel guitar], while *My Caballo* tells the story of 15 year old Lucy's love of horses. While riding one day a bear appears in front of the horse, with the lyric, "thank heaven for horses, that know how to turn on the gas". Luckily for us young Lucy was saved. *You Make It Easy* is a more upbeat commercial song and sounds like a long-lost Doobie Brothers track. Years ago, this would have been the lead single and it would probably have been a big hit [sadly not now though]. As things start to wind down with the ballad, *The Gift*, and the short banjo driven *Leavin' You* there is a problem, I don't want Lucy Billings to stop singing. I just can't find anything wrong with this superb disc. The songs, vocals, backing-tracks, production, and sound mix are all near to perfection. 2011 has got off to a wonderful start.

Paul Riley

JOHNNY BURNETTE The Ballads Of...

★ ★ ★



Dreamin' / Clown Shoes / My Special Angel / Please Help Me I'm Falling / Shattered Dreams / I'll Never Love Again / Love Me / You're Sixteen / I Just Found Out / Settlin' The Woods On Fire / Don't Do It / It's Only Make Believe / I Love You So / Dream Lover / You're So Fine / Pledge Of Love / I Beg Your Pardon / Big Big World / The Fool / Walk On By / You're The Reason / Hello Walls / God, Country And My Baby / Just Out Of Reach / Moody River / It's My Way / Roses Are Red / Bigger Man / Less Than A Heartbeat / Little

Boy Sad

Producers: Henry Jerome / Snuff Garrett and others

Bear Family

72:48

The first time Roy Orbison met Johnny Burnette, Roy was waiting for an elevator. The doors opened and there was Johnny and his brother Dorsey, rolling on the floor and punching the hell out of each other.

The fiery nature of the Burnette boys was doubtless one of the factors that made the rockabilly records of the Johnny Burnette Rock'n'Roll Trio among the most untamed and elemental of the genre.

But there was another side to John Joseph (Johnny) Burnette, which this 30-track collection celebrates.

While hiccupping stompers like *Tear It Up* and *The Train Kept A-Rollin'* have continued to excite every subsequent generation of rockabilly fans, their longevity as classics is out of all proportion to their scant commercial success when first released in the 50s.

It was in his second career as the smooth faced, smooth voiced teen ballad singer of early 60s hits like *Dreamin'* that Burnette found international success.

The last mentioned remains a classic of post-rock'n'roll, pre-Beatles American pop. With its yearning vocal, brisk pace and bright string arrangement it still sounds great.

The same is true of Burnette's other big trans-Atlantic smash *You're Sixteen* - even if, for me, it's impossible to hear the song without thinking of Vincent Diver of the Majestics singing it in fabled BBC comedy-drama *Tutti Frutti*.

While *Dreamin'* and *You're Sixteen* will always have a place on any good hits of the 60s collection, it has to be said that once you get past the hits, Burnette's ballad years can be a bit of a plod.

He has a good voice and, amid some forgettable original songs, he makes a fair fist of other people's biggies, like *Dream Lover* and *It's Only Make Believe*, but his versions are unessential. Country covers

such as *Please Help Me I'm Falling* are less solid. Burnette is trying to sound like a lovelorn teenager whereas a song like *Hello Walls* needs the voice of a heart-broke adult.

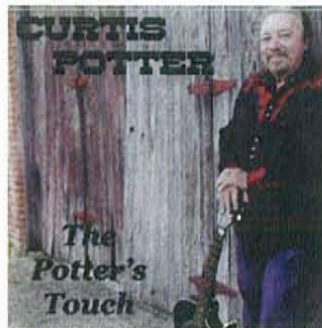
Burnette died young in a boating accident in 1964. There is enough evidence here of his talent to prompt the old 'what if?' questions about how his career might have developed.

But I'd much rather listen to him out-Gene Vincenting Gene Vincent on salacious, echo-drenched microphone humpers like *Eager Beaver Baby*.

Douglas McPherson

CURTIS POTTER The Potter's Touch

★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2



You Wouldn't Cross The Street (To Say Goodbye) / The End / Darkness On The Face Of The Earth / Bring Me Sunshine / Will Love Still Feel Like A Song? / I Don't Wanna Cry / Once More With Feeling / That's What I Do Best / Sweet Memories / Will You Ever Know? / Some Other World / A Fool Such As I / Family Bible

Producer: Justin Trevino
Heart Of Texas Records
40:26

A couple of singles barely cracking the Top 100 country chart really don't do Curtis Potter justice (and criminally, neither of them were *You Comb Her Hair Every Morning* or *Walkin' Talkin' Breathin' Case Of Sorrow*). He is one of the finest voices of traditional country you could ever wish to find. He had his own TV at the age of 16, and regularly featured on the Slim Willet (*Don't Let The Stars Get In Your Eyes*) Show, and spent 13 years fronting Hank Thompson's Brazo Valley Band. He also set up the successful

indie label, Step One Records, with Ray Pennington but inexplicably has no Wikipedia entry in his own name.

For the past five years Potter has been a Heart Of Texas artist which means he still gets to play "anywhere steel guitars and fiddles can be played" and make the kind of honky-tonk / Western Swing records he always has and does so well.

Potter has long had a close association with Willie Nelson, having cut an album for Hillside of Willie songs, and recording his excellent *Six Hours At Pedernales* some year ago and for his latest he has cut three Nelson compositions (*You Wouldn't Cross The Street...*, *Darkness On The Face Of The Earth*, and the superb *Once More With Feeling*), as well as the cheesy Morcambe and Wise theme, *Bring Me Sunshine*, which was aced by Willie back in the 60s.

He also tackles Mickey Newbury's *Sweet Memories* in fine style and absolutely nails the fantastic Larry Gatlin song, *I Don't Wanna Cry* and a Little Jimmy Dickens (and others) written, *That's What I Do Best*, which is a fabulous laid-back shuffle.

Justin Trevino has produced, and one of his best songs - *The End* - makes it onto the album. I preferred the arrangement here to Justin's original cut on his *Too Many Heartaches* album.

Guyanne McCall has been providing some high quality material for HOTR artists of late, and here she supplies *Will You Ever Know* and *Will Love Still Feel Like A Song* which further prove her writing skills when it comes to real country songs. Neither is out of place among material from the heavyweights here. Hopefully it won't be long until one the HOTR artists records a whole album of her songs (Darrell McCall maybe?).

Many CMP readers tell me they buy everything this label releases and those fans will be delighted with *The Potter's Touch*, but in case you've never heard a Curtis Potter record I urge you check out one of the finest exponents of real country. He's a treasure and this is another example of why.

Duncan Warwick