

# Hit List

There are a couple of notable covers, beginning with a stomping version of Ray Charles' "What'd I Say." Not typically associated with a solo acoustic player, the song's recognizable bass line and melody roll together perfectly – just Mize and his guitar, funky and soulful. Mize also covers Charlie Rich's gospel tune, "Feel Like Going Home." With help from Pete Wasner on a Hammond B-3, Mize delivers the deep religious feel.

*The Angel's Share* proves it takes more than just chops to be great – and Mize proves a great song can deliver as well as an overt display of chops. – **JH**



**Bruce Cockburn**  
*Small Source Of Comfort*  
True North

In more ways than one, American audiences are still catching up with this Canadian singer/songwriter. In fact, that tag illustrates how those of us south of the border are largely familiar with only one aspect of this multi-pronged talent.

His 2005 Rounder release, *Speechless*, revealed a side of Cockburn his Canadian fans were aware of since his early-'70s albums – his instrumental fingerpicking. In fact, the highly recommended album's 15 tracks mixed brand-new works with selections dating back across the 65-year-old's impressive catalog, which now numbers 31 studio albums.

His earlier instrumental work sometimes found him in a Kottke-esque mode (a Canadian cousin to John Fahey's school of "America primitive guitar"), best represented here on "Bohemian 3-Step." He also

offers the rolling, cinematic "Lois On The Autobahn" and "Comets Of Kandahar," which he aptly describes as "Django meets John Lee Hooker." Both feature Jenny Scheinman's violin, as does "Parnassus And Fog." The new-agey "Ancestors" is a bit like Will Ackerman's "Processional" with extra flourishes.

Cockburn's fingerstyle dexterity is equally impressive when backing his vocals, as on the opening "Iris Of The World." Though there's nothing as pointed here as "If I Had A Rocket Launcher," Cockburn shows his acerbic side on "Call Me Rose," wherein

## extra! EXTRA!



**CASSANDRA WILSON**, *Silver Pony* (Blue Note)  
Cassandra Wil-

son's voice is – and always has been – an instrument into and of itself. She's an amazing singer, as this half-live/half-studio record helps illustrate. Her wonderful band includes the absurdly good Marvin Sewell on guitar. *Silver Pony* is a jazz/R&B feast. – **JH**



**JOHN-ALEX MASON**, *Jook Joint Thunderclap* (Naked Jaybird Music)

The thunderclap hits at the heart of what you may think are the blues, but John-Alex Mason deconstructs and creates his own vision of juke-joint music. Joined with guitarman Gerry Hundt and Cedric and Cody Burnside, these are lowdown, rapping, spine-tingling blues. – **MD**



**DUE WEST**, *Forget The Miles* (Black River Entertainment)

This electric-guitar-laden pop-country romp by the three-front-man amalgamation is slick, slick, *slick*. It's also mastered for max volume/radio friendliness. But despite its more-than-slightly "hot country" tendencies, the tunes are strong and the picking is Brad-Paisley-quality. Though it's only a six-song EP, Due West has enough notes for a full-length album. – **SS**



**GANG OF FOUR**, *Content* (Yep Roc)

Combining punk attitude and funk grooves, England's Gang Of Four debuted with 1979's *Entertainment*, a major influence on indie bands like R.E.M. and INXS. Their first album of new material in 16 years finds founding members Jon King (vocals) and Andy Gill (guitar) backed by

drummer Mark Heaney and bassist Thomas McNiece on 10 originals that are both taut and provocative. – **DF**



**BERT JANSCH CO-NUSTRUM**, *Thirteen Down* (Stefan Grossman's Guitar Workshop)

Though originally released in 1980 – hardly the apex of folk-rock – this record from Scottish folk hero (and Pentangle founder) Jansch is wonderful stuff. Featuring Bert's excellent fingerstyle and vocals, and terrific support from his band, it's hard not to dig this CD. Check out "Sovay," "Where Did My Life Go," and the appropriate "Let Me Sing." – **PP**



**CARL VERHEYEN BAND**, *The Road Divides* (Cranktone)

A live DVD from this Steely Dan inspired trio featuring guitarist/vocalist/songwriter Verheyen playing expert jazz/blues/fusion licks on a series of tasty guitars. The presentation is polished and serves a good introduction to a player worth a listen. – **RA**



**VARIOUS ARTISTS**, *The Baseball Project, Volume 2: High and Inside* (Yep Roc Records)

Following the wonderful *Vol. 1: Frozen Ropes & Dying Quails*, this is another disc of songs about baseball. Songs about Tim Lincicum, Ichiro, Pete Rose, and the Minnesota Twins, all accompanied by killer guitar licks and fine vocals from the likes of R.E.M.'s Peter

Buck are your perfect road into the 2011 season. – **JH**



**SARAH DARLING**, *Angels & Devils* (Black River Entertainment)

Jimmy Nichols' multi-textured production elevates Darling's *Angels & Devils* from standard Nashville pop to a honed singer/songwriter showcase. With original songs taking up 10 of the 12 slots on two CDs, Darling displays a flare for writing and singing torchy, highly emotional tunes. – **SS**



**PAUL REVERE & THE RAIDERS**, *The Essential* (Columbia/Legacy)

This double-disc confuses "essential" with "career overview." The classic lineup, featuring guitarist Drake Levin (then Jim Valley) and bassist Phil "Fang" Volk, are gone before the end of Disc 1; arguably their best album, *Midnight Ride*, is sorely under-represented, and the hits (and flips) the band is remembered for are already on the Collectors Choice *Complete Columbia Singles*. A missed opportunity. – **DF**



**LUCY BILLINGS**, *No Other Road* (Sassy Time Records)

Billings tells great stories via song. The poignant and beautiful "Daddy's Last Drive" is wistful and full of love. Other songs are charming in a way that disarms and pulls you in. She has a great voice and the production and guitar work from John Jennings are on the money. – **JH**



**JOSCHO STEPHAN**, *Gypsy Meets Jazz* (Acoustic Music Records)

German Gypsy guitar virtuoso Stephan returns with a new album of pyrotechnics. He covers Django, of course, but also remakes "Take the A train," Charlie Parker's "Donna Lee," and Chick Corea's "Spain" à la Gypsy jazz. – **MD**



**AMY SPEACE**, *Land Like a Bird* (Thirty Tigers)

Except for the extended song introductions, Speace's latest is the perfect vehicle for her newest batch of songs. Displaying a softer, more introspective side than her last release, *Land Like A Bird* is more ambitious with a denser sonic landscape thanks to producer Neilson Hubbard. Even the spacey, ambient synthesizer washes on the title tune work. – **SS**



**THE BRIDGE**, *National Bohemian* (Woodberry Records)

The Bridge get the lessons learned and passed on by great bands. They're subtle in the right spots, rock when needed, and they write great songs. The guitar work of Cris Jacobs and Kenny Liner's mandolin, along with Los Lobos' Steve Berlin's production, are as perfect as the playing by the entire band. – **JH**



**CARA JEAN WAHLERS**, *Goodnight Charlotte* (Self-distributed)

This collaboration between

singer/songwriter Wahlers and cellist Grover Parido produces a sparse but hardly spartan landscape of moody folk/Americana. At times, Wahlers sounds like mid-period Joni Mitchell, or Kate Wolf in her phrasing and writing. Parido is a versatile accompanist, using a palette of chops and long bowing to fill out the arrangements. – **SS**



**VARIOUS ARTISTS**, *Everybody Wants To Be A Cat* (Disney Pearl)

Jazzers from Louis Armstrong to John Coltrane have had great respect for songs associated with Disney characters and movies. Guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel deftly shifts from minor to major on a beautiful version of *Mary Poppins'* "Feed The Birds (Tuppence A Bag)," while Israeli six-stringer Gilad Hekselman demonstrates the universality of jazz (and Disney) on "Belle," from *Beauty And The Beast*. – **DF**



**TU FAWNING**, *Hearts on Hold* (Provenance Records)

Tu Fawning's debut is part Velvet Underground, part Tom Waits, and all their own. The music is at times gothic, at times surreal – a fascinating vision of rock experimentation that bounces between downright boring and exhilarating. – **MD**



**PAUL OSCHER**, *Bet On The Blues* (Blues Fidelity)

Muddy Waters' former harmonica player exhibits some lowdown guitar skills on this rough-and-ready collection, and even delivers great barrelhouse piano on "Wee Baby Blues." "Slideaway" perhaps reveals the Hound Dog Taylor instrumental that inspired Freddie King's hit, and, like his former boss, Oscher turns "Rock Me Baby" into a 15-bar blues. Somehow it makes perfect sense. – **DF**