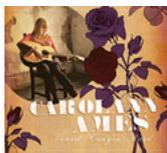


Hit List

Alive with mystery and delicacy, the band's song craft is gripping and impressive. The result is a stunner of an album. — **MD**



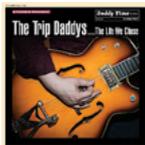
Carolann Ames
Laurel Canyon Road

Self-distributed

This is the fifth CD from Wyoming-born Ames. She's always been a skilled songwriter but has steadily developed into a better and ultimately first-rate recording artist. Ames has been praised for her "angelic" voice, and that's a good, if somewhat hyperbolic, adjective to use. But too often singers gifted with an instrument as lovely as Ames' allow their vocal skills to substitute for true emotion in their delivery and for substance in both songwriting and record making. That's a trap that Ames avoids.

The songs here are all strong original numbers written by Ames alone, in tandem with guitar player Steve

Peavey, or in various combinations with the rest of the band. The best of them, "Sugar Creek," "Steel Rose," and "Bed Of Roses," are made just that much better by Peavey's guitar and Melissa Harley's fiddle complementing the vocal. Since most of the tunes are mid-tempo, big kudos also go to drummer Rob Hooper, who keeps things snapping without overplaying and forcing his way in. He can also step to it in livelier numbers like "Love Remains Unbroken" and "Everybody's Somebody In A Honky Tonk" which recalls some of Jackson Browne's uptempo tunes like "Redneck Friend." If you haven't yet "discovered" Carolann Ames, *Laurel Canyon Road* is a good spot to jump in. — **RA**



The Trip Daddys
The Life We Chose

Daddy Time Records

When they hand out awards for road warriors, the Trip Daddys should be

first in line. And as their new album proudly proclaims, it's the life they chose.

The rockabilly trio was formed in St. Louis back in 1995 and quickly became famous for their reckless abandon at shows. Led by guitarist/vocalist/songwriter Craig Straubinger (a.k.a. Craig Daddy), the able rhythm section includes bassist Tracey Morrissey and drummer Dennis Williams. Yet label the Trip Daddys as rockabilly at your own peril. Rockabilly itself was never a pure music, and Straubinger defiantly disclaims himself as a traditionalist. Instead, the band proudly pulls in influences from the blues, rock and roll, and punk in the form of Minor Threat and Black Flag.

The Life We Chose pays tribute to the band's mileage and inspirations. The album is mostly made up of original tunes that move adeptly from straight-on rockabilly to blues to surf.

Intermixed within the originals is a straight-from-the-'50s cover of Roy Orbison's "Claudette" and an instrumental version of the Beatles' 1964 rocker "She's A Woman," ringing with sublime slapback echo.

"Surf Noir" is the fieriest track here, an original instrumental that blends the band's rockabilly and punk tendencies. Straubinger's Gretsch wails with Chuck Berry and Dick Dale licks, Duane Eddy twang, and Bigsby divebombs. It's all set to a raucous, high-speed, minor-key jam of which Annette Funicello would have never approved. The more the better. — **MD**



Pat Mastelotto
Recidivate

7d Media

Drummer Mastelotto works on the avant-garde fringes, in a realm some might call prog or, perhaps better, art-rock. He's best known for his stint in latter incarnations of King Crimson (as well as the '80s pop band Mr. Mister), but he's also recorded a huge range of music with musicians like Robert Fripp, Steven Wilson, Tony Levin, the California Guitar Trio, Tovah, and other sonic adventurers. *Recidivate* is

extra! EXTRA!



CHARLIE PARR,
Keep Your Hands
On The Plow

(House Of Mercy)

Minnesotan Parr recorded his eighth album in 10 years (a collection of mostly traditional gospel tunes) in a Duluth church to get just the right acoustics — and, no doubt, inspiration. Electric guitar, fiddle, and percussion embellish some numbers, but the driving forces are Parr's banjo and steel-bodied slide, which are almost as impassioned as his vocals. What a find! — **DF**



SHANE DWIGHT,
A Hundred White
Lies (R-Tist

Records)

Guitarist and singer Dwight shows he's an encyclopedia of American music. While his strong suit is R&B, there's plenty of country and rock too. His solos and vocals are on the money as is the playing from the band, including Delbert McClinton guitarist Rob McNelley on rhythm and slide. — **JH**



ROY ROBERTS,
Strange Love

(Ocean Beach

Records) Nothing strange about it: This is an in-the-pocket session by a lifelong blues pro. Roy Roberts offers up tight blues and R&B songs backed by a powerful horn section. His stinging guitar leads ring true, mixing it up with Hammond organ to create a finger-snapping sound. — **MD**



KAY KAY & THE
RAYS, The Best Of

(Catfood)

Powerhouse blues singer and songwriter Kay Kay Greenwade's ill health makes returning to performing unlikely. For now, there's this dynamic collection featuring the soulful ballad "Don't Have To Tell Me," with Joe Eads, and smart, funky, big-band blues with Johnny Rawls — two of several outstanding guitarists. — **RA**



TOM RIGNEY AND
FLAMBEAU, Don't
Fight It (Parhelion)

Fiddler/vocalist Rigney has been a Bay Area fixture since his days with bluegrass' Skunk Cabbage. For this eclectic zydeco unit, he wisely tapped guitarist Danny Caron, a veteran of Charles Brown, Maria Muldaur, Mitch Woods, John Lee Hooker, and the zydeco king himself, Clifton Chenier. Caron's a master mixologist of taste and sting, as he illustrates on the minor-key "Rigo's Blues." — **DF**



BRENT MASON,
Recording Guitar

(Music Pro Media)

The Nashville

session ace takes us into the studio on this DVD, demonstrating how he'd record guitar tracks for two songs. We also get a look at his gear, and he talks about his career. All fine and good, but the real treat is seeing how well he plays guitar! — **JH**



MARC VEE, My
Journey (Self-

distributed)

Vee's journey begins with "Joyful," a jazz-rock-blues fusion that is indeed pure happiness. Blending acoustic rhythms with his electric leads, his finale cover of "Stairway To Heaven" is a virtuosic salute to his heroes. — **MD**



JAMES CARTER
ORGAN TRIO, At
The Crossroads

(Decca)

About a dozen players turn up on Detroit saxophonist Carter's "trio" session, with Bruce Edwards swapping guitar chores with Brandon Ross. The former (previously with Sun Ra) displays a nice, clean tone and speedy "pedal" picking on the swinging opener, "Oh Gee." The latter (a veteran of Archie Shepp, Cassandra Wilson, and others) is featured



DALE WATSON &
THE TEXAS TWO,
The Sun Sessions

(Red House)

Watson and his band hit Sun Studios in Memphis and channel the spirit of the pioneers that recorded there with skill and grace, especially from Watson's guitar. It's tough to not think of Johnny Cash on a song with a title like "Down Down Down Down Down." — **JH**



JANIE FRICKE,
Country Side Of
Bluegrass (New

Musical Deals)

Is this country presented as bluegrass or vice versa? Who cares? With this one only a sourpuss would worry about such irrelevant distinctions. Fricke's voice is warm and sweet, and players like Randy Kohrs on Dobro and fiddler Luke Bulla are downright exquisite on J.D. Souther's "Faithless Love" and elsewhere. — **RA**



LOVE, Black Beau-
ty (High Moon) In

1973, visionary

bandleader Arthur

Lee formed a new version of Love. Unfortunately, his label folded before the lineup's debut could be released. The album reveals Lee (the "other black hippie") in pseudo-calypto form on "Beep Beep," then heavily influenced by Hendrix — as on "Midnight Sun," resembling "Wind Cries Mary" and "Bold As Love," with lead guitarist Melvan Whittington supplying adequate Hendrixisms. — **DF**



WISHBONE ASH,
Elegant Stealth

(ZXY Music)

Andy Powell is still serving up great guitar licks, but he's got a new partner this time around in Finland's Muddy Manninen. But you'll still hear majestic rock songs with fine lyrics and the trademark dual guitar lines that have dominated Wishbone's tunes, especially evident on "Mud Slick." — **JH**



BOOKA AND THE
FLAMING GECKOS,
The Not So
Meaningful Songs

In The Life Of Jeremy Fink (Loudhouse Records) After that title, there's only space left to say this literary/cinema inspired multi-genre (blues, folk, "acid western") recording features percussionist Booka Michel, Cindy Cashdollar on steel, lap steel and Pogreba Weissenborn, and guests like guitarist Kenny Franklin. Different, but darn good. — **RA**