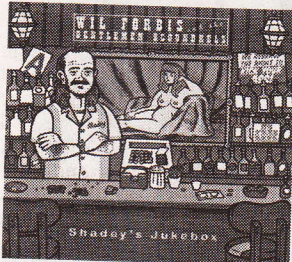


existing as an "old brown mule" into a sound effects-laden surprise symphony where your remote control is your zap gun and the usually downtrodden television is transmuted into the might-as-well jolt of imagination. It goes down like the cola of the same name, a soon to crash buzz fills you. This album exists today without the frills of the modern twist keeping your neck straight and untwisted?

Wil Forbis and The Gentlemen Scoundrels **SHADEY'S JUKEBOX**

By J.R. Sage



"Get off my land, you UFO flyin' space freak." To go from this enchanting sentiment, to ragtime benefited with sousaphoned one-liners, and on to the

musical aromas of a barfly with breakneck wishes takes the sprawling attitudes of a favorite jukebox. To lay out these pitch-perfect ballads, rockers and other-ers with the panache of a 1970s pop rock bandleader (the sort of band that has the perfect moods for these unimperfect times, but has never made their name household) takes the eclectic weepings of one Wil Forbis. With fiddle, banjo, and pedal steel along for every other part of the ride, Wil remains in alternative country zone for most of this, allowing this set of quarter-picks to exist in the modern stoney folk rock revival and the older, more reliable country rock scene agreeably.

The cleverly cartoonish album cover and backside, drawn by someone named Wayne, remind me very much of The Cinema Bar in Culver City. Maybe it's the structure of the bar, the wall jukebox and cigarette smoking 30-something, or the 'No Free Beer' sign, but it's probably the music. It's a good time where musical chops are ready for explosions, kept in check to make sure you fill the whole night with the parts over the sum. Like Wil's many story-songs here, you'll feel like you happily got off the floor after one half beer too many, 'cause the dancin's good.

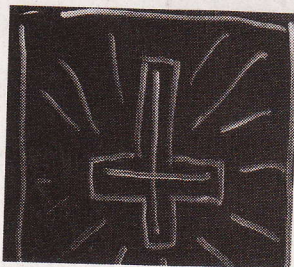
On the lead track, Jesus plays the role of a "little red pill" and gets a shuffle treatment worthy of LA's own Merle Jagger, and like that band's tuneful antics, Wil's story takes a subtly psychedelic turn after he eats the Jesus pill. His singing is at times Leon Redbone ("Old Before My Time"), at others Honky Chateau-era Elton John ("Back To Normal"). The latter asks simply and charmingly why a certain relationship can't just... exist. "Peter, tell her I'm not the enemy," he tells his soloist before the solo. As the title might suggest, "Fing Fang Foom" is an instrumental of check-this-nugget-out proportions. A Heads, Hands & Feet-style guitar flea circus morphs into the best unexpected old-timey stretch-out this side of Steely Dan's "East St. Louis Toodle-oo." Even the whistle-capped closing look-back on life so far sets grin in place: "Had I known it would be this way/ I'd crawl back in bed and there I'd stay."

Mr. Forbis comes off like a wry joker, but his back-story is one of literary stature awash in cheap spirits. He and his Gentlemen Scoundrels want

you to feel like you just put \$2.50 in the machine after five cold ones, crossing your fingers that your picks will work out well enough for what's-her-name who just walked in to, smile madly, and dance gladly.

Joe Buck Yourself **GORY GORY HALLELUJAH**

By Eric N. Rasmussen



From the first barely audible strains, this 5 song EP captures the essence of America's dark shadow. Modern yet simultaneously ancient, it somehow

evokes both the USA of today and also of her entire past. Joe Buck looks like a hillbilly skeleton with a thin layer of skin stretched out over his body and a frizzy mohawk sprouting from his head. You might know him as the bass player for Hank III, the guy who appears to be possessed by a demon and rips the bass a new asshole. I was surprised to learn that he also writes and records his own stuff, which has now seduced me like some kind of occult fascination-spell had been cast.

Banjo and mandolin have never sounded quite so mournful together as they do in the intro to the first song, "Demon in my Head." Suddenly, we're blasted with ripping, distorted, whammy-bent guitar that sends shivers down your spine. The whole recording makes me feel like a teenager who has just discovered Slayer for the first time, getting that feeling in my stomach like I have to take a shit, because there is something exciting and scary about such an evil sound. I ask myself why a God-fearing man should enjoy it so much, when the main lyrics to the first song are "There's a demon in my head, oh lord! demon in my head and he wants you dead." How can something so evil sound so good? I can't explain it, but it gives a supernatural thrill.

True, the songs are sometimes kind of repetitive, but Buck keeps surprising me with arrangement changes and adding in another verse when I thought he wouldn't. This EP is certainly some kind of landmark, a pinnacle of expression of a marriage between totally blasted, scumfuck hillbilly and the gnarliest, really scary demonic death metal. That doesn't really tell you anything about how fucking great it sounds though.

There is a lot of variety of style in these 5 songs, but there is always that dark sound coupled with something more earthen, primal, simple but not simplistic. The track "Music City's Dead" is probably my favorite. This tune doesn't have acoustic instrumentation but nevertheless we get that feeling of a mountain man stomping his foot on the porch throughout the tune, a relentless, grinding intensity. "I'm going back to the country to a trailer on a lake in the shimmering pines." That track alone is worth getting the album for, not to mention the artwork, done in Joe's own hand. He even wrote Gory Gory Hallelujah on the cd face. That's what I call DIY.

Neil Young **SUGAR MOUNTAIN** *Live At Canterbury House 1968* By JR Sage



In 1968, Neil Young had just quit the two-year-long Sunset Strip sensation Buffalo Springfield, and was moving from Hollywood to the hills of

Topanga Canyon, ready to start a career of solo albums that would polarize, unite, drag and excite the generations. At 23 years old, here he is at a club in Ann Arbor, Michigan playing for over an hour, with only his voice and his acoustic guitar. I'm a fan, so when the forces that be release high quality audio discs of concerts I never could have attended, I get stoked. The core of Young's acoustic and scenic balladry is just high soaring and distantly comic. The sort of environment that he creates through his completely real stage presence and, at the time, unconventional singing voice, makes you feel humanly comfortable. I knew what I was getting into and so do you, probably.

There have been two similar releases in the past two years. *Live At The Fillmore East* from 1970 and *Live At Massey Hall* from 1971 were both quite successfully opened archives that delved smoothly into not creating a sensation, but what really existed at the time. Therefore, a sort of peace of mind for live music in general propels. I've played this one called *Sugar Mountain* twice, and it's playing through my wood-shelled speakers as I write this. It's a naive and earnest affair. The other two live albums were from someone with the CSNY fame on their tongue tip, but here, at the beginning of his often-lonely journey, Neil learns as he plays. You can really feel that each way he's singing, so spare and so jaggedly flowing, is another rock step up the hill to figuring out a public presence.

The candle-lit trip starts out with the announcer admitting, "We only expected a lot less people. You were a lot wiser than we were." Wonderful. After his first number, Neil mentions something slight, yet so right. "This is the longest my hair has ever been. I'm just gonna let it grow and grow and grow." This is true, and how becoming for an early stage as this. You can experience almost identical stages of young adult pre-passion at your local coffee shop on open-mic night. Here is not only the future auteur behind *Tonight's The Night* and *Rust Never Sleeps*, but he's playing the screams of the soon to be faded 1960's through a whispering prism of acoustic groove.

The songs are inter-cut with seven "Raps," which luckily don't include the talented Canadian being so prophetic as to wearing Hammer pants and sampling dance hits, but rather little singer-songwriter stories. "I used to play lead guitar. I used to be a blues band." He talks about getting fired from the only job he ever had besides playing music: delivering books. "I got fired for irregularity. I couldn't be depended on to be consistent." He raps about D-modal tuning, red pills, VU meters, and how down all his songs seem. The price of your admission, should you accept the charges, will lead you to a glorious and simplified version of "Expecting To Fly." An early playing of "Birds" points to his peak at this alone realm. "Mr. Soul" takes on a both meditative and manic feeling. An audience member suggests he play "Outta My Mind," and I smiled good. Even Neil smiles. You can tell just by listening. He's realizing that people know that song from the first Springfield album. He wonders if you hear what he does when he plays. You can't be twenty on *Sugar Mountain*, but that's what makes hearing of it so choice. JA