

Michael Weston King
I DIDN'T RAISE MY BOY TO BE A SOLDIER

Valve #2787

★★★★

Protest music, but not as you know it

Yet another chapter in the varied career of Michael Weston King, one of Britain's truly great singer-songwriters. He's always moving, from the eclectic country-rocker during the days of the Good Sons to a powerful solo act (the classic album *A DECENT MAN*), a travelling minstrel (on varied albums either recorded live or while darting into studios on his constant US and European tours) or master of exquisite country (the gorgeous *MY DARLING CLEMENTINE*, duets with partner Lou Dalglish, recorded with some of Britain's top players such as pianist Geraint Watkins and fiddler Bob Loveday, which is still to settle on a label).

Here he emerges as a protest singer, with a selection gems old and new. But this isn't just playing at the 1960s, a man, a beard, a guitar. The best-known song, Dylan's *I Pity The Poor Immigrant*, gets a snappy backbeat, the self-penned anti-war anthem *In Time* explodes from beneath screaming pedal steel, Phil Ochs' *Is There Anybody Here?* becomes a jangling rocker and the title track uses bleak WWI lyrics against a deceptively charming piano melody. MWK's pure, soaring vocals, the antithesis of most protest singers, then find a God-given home on Jim Ford and Bobby Womack's soulful cry *Sounds Of Our Time*.

Musicians include long-time campadre Alan Cook on steel and mandolin, guitarist Paul Hesketh and fellow singer-songwriter Jeb Loy Nichols on backing vocals. Protest music for a new generation, but as heart-felt as anything you'll ever hear. **ND**
www.michaelwestonking.com



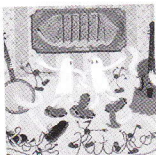
Lucky to put his everything into singing with such deep passion. With fiddle and mandolin, this is a great country ballad. *Snug as a Bug* trifles on irritating with the saxophone played by Mike Clark. If your ears can become immune to this, you will find an exceptional country track with some delightful mandolin playing by Kathy Cook. Overall, *UP THE HIGHWAY* is very deep, with slow and sad melodies like that on *Flood Season in Texas* but with tracks such as *Breaux Bridge Blues*, Lucky will certainly lift your dampened mood. If you are after a country album with slick melodies, but with many intimate moments, Lucky Holloway's latest release will be the perfect sound for you. **CB**
www.luckyholloway.com

Water Tower Bucket Boys
SOLE KITCHEN
 Self-released

★★★★

Unique take on old-timey music

This is quite a quirky album, and doesn't really sound like your typical bluegrass/acoustic album. Water Tower Bucket Boys are very talented, and must sound great live; this album being an excellent showcase for their abilities. Songs tend to start slow then up the tempo for the chorus and then come back down to slow again. Waltzes are a dime a dozen on here, and are expertly performed, bringing with it the feel of old-timey records, and you would swear that banjo is echoing down the years from the golden age of Appalachian music. Not quite as modern as the Steeldrivers or the Notorious Stringdusters, Water Tower Bucket Boys don't try to ape any artist in particular, but bring their own feel and uniqueness to the record. **DJ**

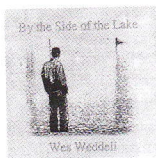


Wes Weddell
BY THE SIDE OF THE LAKE
 Dusty Shadows Music

★★★★

An album in need of more work to raise the overall standard

Wes Weddell is a singer-songwriter from Seattle who has won a few awards for previous albums and his songwriting. *BY THE SIDE OF THE LAKE* is his fourth release and



is unfortunately, unworthy of any awards.

Weddell has written all of the songs except one, each telling a story. He starts off *Remember When* a track that is a nice introduction. His vocals are soft and fit the song well and is probably the best song on the 11-track album. *By The Side Of The Lake* the title-track, shows Weddell reaching some high notes which ruins the song. I think he needs to work on his vocals on some tracks including *By The Side Of The Lake*, *Not Now*, *Got Out Some* and *Thanks To The Many*. The unexpected female vocal on the final track didn't go down too well on this album. The song wasn't great anyway but the out of tune vocals from the female definitely made it worse, although, the harmonies sounded okay. The song is boring and never-ending.

The album is unfortunately a disappointment which is a shame as it started out well but as it went on, it became tedious and hard to listen to. Maybe on the next album, his songwriting skills will have improved alongside his vocals. **AmyW**
<http://www.wesweddell.com/>

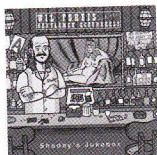
Wil Forbis and the Gentleman Scoundrels
SHADEY'S JUKEBOX
 Rankoutsider Records

★★★★★

Bringing to mind the best of They Might Be Giants, this is one damn fine album

This entirely self-penned album by Wil is something special. His quirky writing style is something to admire because of his extraordinary talent to bedazzle you with his superb lyrics and ability to send the audience on a whirlwind romance with his songs. Based in Los Angeles, he is joined by fourteen other very talented people who among them contribute saxophone, sousaphone, piano, pedal steel, fiddle and what is described as 'alien percussion'.

The Better Man Won has a fine energetic, big band sound. This is music to get you up on your feet and dance your troubles away. It has a gospel feel to it at times, and is demonstrated best when towards the end it evolves into an instrumental tune which adds further credibility to this band's awesomeness. *Let's Get High On Jesus* possesses an energetic,



traditional rock and roll sound but with a tongue-in-cheek feel to it. An accomplished band showing their comedic credentials, it must be amazing to see this performed live especially to witness Cliff Kane's efforts on pedal steel.

I'm not exactly sure how Wil did it, but he is responsible for writing some superb material which is performed so well you instantly want to join a fan club of his and tell all those around you about this excellent album. **RH**
www.wilforbis.com

Treasa Levasseur
LOW FIDELITY
 Outside Music

★★★★★

Easy-listening, relaxing and overall, a good album

Treasa Levasseur has produced an album that has the kind of music she likes to listen to and many of her new and existing fans like this sound too. Treasa demonstrates her fantastic vocals throughout this album on a series of catchy tracks that stick in your head all day and, once you have listened to it, you will find yourself singing along in no time.

The album starts with *Help Me Over* which is a great start. The strong vocals tell a story about love, like many of her songs. *Big Fat Mouth* is a song that will be popular with her audience. It is a song about how she has been in trouble throughout life because of things she has said. She relates to the listener by saying: 'those of you that got one too know what I'm talking about'.

This album has a real variety of songs and is a delightful treat to the ears. I was left wanting to hear more. **AmyW**

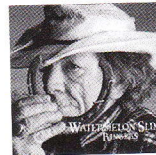


Watermelon Slim
RINGERS
 Northern Blues Music

★★★★★

The continuing eclectic, country music journey, but without leaving the blues too far behind!

Slim (Bill Homans) covers pretty much all bases in rural roots music on this album. He started out as a country bluesman and, indeed was much feted, but in recent times



he seems to be moving in a more countryish direction. His last album *ESCAPE FROM THE CHICKEN COOP* started this slight diversion and this current album takes it a step further. There is some beautiful slide guitar throughout and some lovely atmospheric steel, but with his gruff vocals there is always that bluesy, countryish honky-tonk feeling, despite the mainly classic country instrumentation.

There are some excellent songs, not least of which is Jimmy Buffet's *He Went To Paris* which Slim invests with all the sorrow and tragedy that the story demands. There is a protest about the lessening of the importance in the modern world of trains in *End Of The Line*, his self-written slightly twisted gospel of *Please Take This Cup*, and the dangers of idolatry in *No Way To Reach Nirvana*, which namechecks the late Kurt Cobain. There are classic honky-tonk songs, a cowboy ballad or two, truck driving songs, even twinning songs including the gorgeous *Cowboys Are Common As Sin*, in fact just about every type of song that inhabits this bluesy country genre.

Most of the musicians used on the album are from Nashville but there is none of the glossy sheen normally associated with that city's music. This is a good album, not hugely original in style but well worth a listen and if this journey continues, promises much for his next album. **MikeM**
www.watermelonslim.com

Tori Sparks
THE SCORPION IN THE STORY
 Glass Mountain Records-
 GMR644167077620

★★★★★

Vocals that are drenched in emotion

Nashville resident Tori Sparks has just released her third album and it is a concept album made up of true stories from the road, each song being written about a real person and each one being from a different city. *Tall Towers* is a murder ballad with an underlying sensuality, sung with passion over a bed of jazz which includes some great banjo from Will Kimbrough as well as a tremendous drum rhythm from Steve Bowman. Tori's vocals are outstanding and this is by far the best track on the album. Another top track is the powerful

