



In Tune

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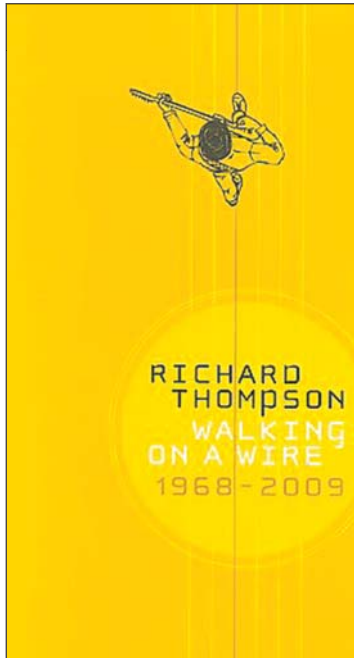
Thompson triumphs

With his band, with his wife and by himself, the iconic Richard Thompson has amassed a remarkable body of work over four decades

RICHARD THOMPSON, "Walking on a Wire: Richard Thompson (1968-2009)" (Shout! Factory) ★★☆☆ — Richard Thompson has become a true icon over the course of a remarkable recording career that has spanned some four decades. From his early years in folk collective Fairport Convention to his still-amazing collaborations with wife Linda to a consistently excellent solo career that continues to this day (2007's "Sweet Warrior" contained some of the best work of his career), the London-born Thompson has recorded thousands of songs and influenced countless young artists over the years. Shout! Factory has given the 60-year-old Thompson his just due with "Walking on a Wire," an exhaustively thorough — and enjoyable — four-CD career retrospective.

The 71 songs gathered here touch on all phases of Thompson's résumé — with Fairport Convention classics such as "Time Will Show the Wisest," "Genesis Hall" and the beyond-words-good "Sloth" dominating the first two discs alongside the Richard and Linda Thompson gems "When I Get to the Border," "I'll Regret It All in the Morning," "Don't Let a Thief Steal Into Your Heart" and "Did She Jump or Was She Pushed."

The final two discs focus mainly on his solo material, with Thompson shining brightest on "Little Blue Number," "I Still Dream," "Dad's Gonna Kill Me" and "She Sang Angels to Rest." There also are a handful of recordings with fellow British folk rock legend Danny Thompson included, with "Don't Roll Those Bloodshot Eyes at Me" and



"Lotteryland" being the real keepers. This is a fantastic set that should be in the collection of folk music fans everywhere. (Jeffrey Sisk)



SIX ORGANS OF ADMITTANCE, "Luminous Night" (Drag City) ★★☆☆ — For more than a decade, Ben Chasny has been enthralled fans and critics alike as Six Organs of Admittance. Two years after the release of the superb "Shelter From the Ash," Six Organs return with more of the dreamy, atmospheric experimental rock that has characterized Chasny's career.

"Luminous Night," while a notch below the past two Six Organs records, nevertheless is a compelling — and often maddening — listen. After setting the tone with the droney instrumental "Actaeon's Fall (Against the Hounds)," Chasny hits his stride with "Anesthesia," "Ursa Minor" and "Enemies Before the Light." There are a few tunes that simply don't work — "Bar-Nasha," "Cover Your Wounds With the Sky," "River of Heaven" — but on balance this is a worthy addition to the Six Organs of Admittance catalog. (JS)



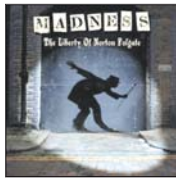
JONES STREET STATION, "In Verses" (Smith Street Records) ★★☆☆ — Though, technically, the remarkably good "In Verses" is the sophomore release for alternative country up-and-comers Jones Street Station, the five members feel like it's their debut. That's because it marks the first record with drummer Sam Rockwell, the first with four singers trading lead vocals and the addition of roadhouse rock to their previous country-tinged folk sound. Ultimately, though, it doesn't matter because Jones Street Station have set the bar high for any subsequent records with this near-perfect collection of 12 strong tunes.

From the delicate opener "Evergreen" to the raw delight of "Neville," it seems as though the band are at the peak of their creative powers. Additional keepers here include "Front Door," "Slow Lights," "High Above the Traffic of Cities," "They Just Keep Disappearing on Me" and "Oh Victoria," though, to be honest, you'd be hard-pressed to find a bad song in the bunch. When the harshest criticism I can come up with is that set closer "Engram" merely is pretty good, you know "In Verses" must be a fantastic record. And it most certainly is. (JS)



THE ANTLERS, "Hospice" (Frenchkiss) ★★☆☆ — If you thought you knew the music of the Antlers, you better think again because a lot has changed in the past couple years. Originally Peter Silberman's solo bedroom arrangements and recordings, the Antlers have added depth to their sound with the addition of a handful of additional musicians. Though Silberman remains the guiding force, "Hospice" introduces listeners to Darby Cicci (trumpet/banjo), Justin Stivers (bass), Michael Lerner (drums) and guest vocals from Sharon Van Etten.

The result is an album that sounds more fleshed out than its predecessor (2007's very good "In the Attic of the Universe") without sacrificing the nuances and idiosyncrasies that made the earlier stuff so appealing. The 10 tracks that make up "Hospice" started as a concept album and after two years in the making is as grandiose as you might imagine. Among the better songs are "Kettering," "Sylvia" and "Thirteen," along with personal favorite "Bear." The first four minutes or so of "Atrophy" are a delight ... unfortunately the track drags out well past the seven-minute mark. (JS)



MADNESS, "The Liberty of Norton Folgate" (Yep Roc) ★★☆☆ — I was in middle school when British-based new wave/ska revivalist outfit Madness scored their biggest U.S. hit in "Our House." More than a quarter century after it was recorded, "Our House" remains the band's most identifiable tune — at least to American audiences — though the band has maintained a presence in their homeland for the better part of 30 years. The surprisingly effective — and consistent — "The Liberty of Norton Folgate" is the first Madness album of new material since 1999's "Wonderful" and finds the guys at the top of their game.

As is the case with most Madness records, "Norton Folgate" contains slice of life tunes about their native London and Madness have added elements of burlesque jazz, rock and polka (?) to their usual ska-reliant pop sound. Highlights on the slightly overstuffed 15-track collection include "We Are London," "Forever Young," "On the Town" (featuring Rhonda Dakar), "Idiot Child" and "NW5." But the centerpiece of the record is the sprawling, multi-layered title track. Over the course of 10 glorious minutes, Madness have done the unthinkable — craft a tune that's replaced "Our House" as my favorite thing the band has done. (JS)

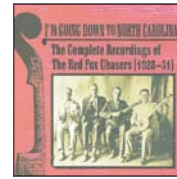


DIVISIBLE, "Less Than Lion" (self-released) ★★☆☆ — With all due respect to Albert Sada, the "other half" of indie pop duo Divisible, "Less Than Lion" is all about vocalist Shola Akinshemoyin. Though Sada does a yeoman's job behind the drumkit and shares writing credits on all 10 of the tracks here, it's Akin Shemoyin's emotion-laden vocals that make Divisible a band to be reckoned with. A Harvard grad who met Sada in Los Angeles, she's a revelation here, incorporating her West African ancestry into the band's catchy sound. Set opener "Living With a Ghost" gets the proceedings off to a fantastic start and after the so-so "Love Is the Cost," Divisible unleash a string of keepers in "A Girl You Can't Leave," "Calm, Collected," and "Big Machines." The record begins to lose steam down the stretch with a string of good-but-not-great tracks before the duo closes things in style with the surprisingly rocking "Exit Music (For a Film)" and personal favorite "The Cutting Room" (JS)

MY FAVORITE GIRL, "Another Bite at the Apple" (Golden City) ★☆☆ — Indie pop duo My Favorite Girl is, in fact, comprised of two members of the fairer. And it probably depends on who you ask as to whether Trish Shallest or Jennifer Czeisler is their favorite. "Another Bite at the Apple"



represents their first album together, but Shallest (as frontwoman for Heart cover band Bebe Le Strange) and Czeisler (former bassist for Pixies tribute band No. 13 Baby) have been fixtures on the Seattle music scene since the early 1990s. My Favorite Girl kick off the 10-track release with the make-you-think "Kingmaker," a sincere tune served up amid lush vocal harmonies. Additional keepers include "Blue Eyes," the saccharine sweet, perfect for summer "Dreamer" and left-turn melancholy of "Can't Let Go." There are a few too many middling tracks — "Step Inside," "Simpler Time," "Superstitions" — that prevent "Another Bite at the Apple" from being an essential release, but it's a very enjoyable album from a pair of very talented musicians. (JS)



THE RED FOX CHASERS, "I'm Going Down to North Carolina: The Complete Recordings of The Red Fox Chasers (1928-31)" (Tompkins Square) ★★☆☆ — Eighty years or so ago, four neighbors in rural North Carolina got together to make some down-home music and the Red Fox Chasers were born. Guy Brooks, Bob Cranford, Paul Miles and A.P. Thompson were one of the more prolific outfits playing Appalachian music and "I'm Going Down to North Carolina" is a fine tribute. The two-disc set contains 42 tracks, showcasing the Red Fox Chasers' fondness for traditional fiddle tunes and ballads, a few original compositions and Tin Pan Alley tunes of the day. Even after painstaking digital remastering, the recordings of some of the songs here still sound primitive, as if they were being played on a dusty old Victrola. Rather than take away from the overall effect, it lends "I'm Going Down to North Carolina" an air of authenticity.

Among the highlights here are traditional tunes such as "Arkansas Traveler," "Turkey in the Straw" and "We Shall Meet on That Beautiful Shore," as well as solid renditions of "May I Sleep in Your Barn Mister," "Put My Little Shoes Away" and the four-part gem "Making Licker in North Carolina." And original tunes such as "Pretty Polly," "Murder of the Lawson Family," "Sweet Fern" and "Two Babies in the Woods" demonstrate just how talented these guys were. (JS)



SISTER HAZEL, "Release" (Rock Ridge Music) ★★☆☆ — Admittedly, Florida-based alternative rock collective Sister Hazel aren't the most original band to emerge from the mid-1990s. However, the guys are smart enough to recognize what they do well and have been following that successful blueprint for going on two decades. While last year's fantastic "Before the Amplifiers: Live Acoustic" release served notice that Sister Hazel were still around, the almost-as-good "Release" gives every indication that the guys still know how to make the music that has sold millions of records since Bill Clinton was in the White House.

The 12 tracks here are very definitely "Sister Hazel" songs, though frontman Ken Block has relinquished primary songwriting duties to his bandmates and outside collaborators. "Release" shows that all five guys are capable of penning a catchy, radio-ready single, with the highlights being guitarist Ran Newell's title track, guitarist/vocalist Drew Copeland's "Run for the Hills," Block's "Walls and Cannonballs" and "See Me Beautiful" and bassist Jett Beres' ser-closing "Ghost on the Crowd." With their well-honed sound firmly in place, "Release" breaks no new ground for Sister Hazel — which is perfectly OK for those who love these guys best. (JS)



DINOSAUR FEATHERS, "Early Morning Risers" (self-released) ★☆☆ — I was giving the latest EP from Brooklyn astro-pop duo Dinosaur Feathers a spin when a colleague stopped by my office and listened to "Early Morning Risers" for several minutes. His reaction to the cacophony of noise-based pop? He said set opener "Cold Arabella" sounds like something that should be played in a Chinese restaurant and the intro to "Don't Fear the Vagabonds" reminded him of what it sounded like when his then-pregnant wife was hooked up to an ultrasound machine.

His tongue-in-cheek critique has some merit, but the overall effect of Dinosaur Feathers and "Early Morning Risers" in particular is greater than the sum of their parts. "Parallel July" is a flat-out great pop song, and the title track isn't too shabby, either. And after the admittedly ob/gyn-escape opening moments of "Vagabonds," it settles into a pretty enjoyable groove. Is the music of Greg Sullo and Derek Zimmerman everyone's cup of tea? Of course not, but it's always interesting and, apparently, an appropriate soundtrack the next time you plow into a bowl of shrimp fried rice. (JS)

Black Eyed Peas set Billboard record for most weeks at No. 1

NEW YORK (AP) — Will.i.am would love to say "I told you so" to all the people who have bashed the Black Eyed Peas in the past, but he won't even though the group just made history on the Billboard charts.

"There's a part of me that wants to be cocky, but then I can't be cocky," the 34-year-old Peas leader said. "There's a part of me that wants to call out all of my other peers and competitors. And would it be wrong if I did that? Yes it would. I'm not like that."

This week the foursome will have topped Billboard's Hot 100 singles charts for 20 consecutive weeks, the most ever by an act. "Boom Boom Pow" and the song that dinged it, "I Gotta Feeling," have been at the top of the charts for 12 and eight weeks, respectively.