**LEGSYBOY’S GRANDES – 2013**

Bueno mi hermanos…and so a year of hand clapping, foot stomping, sangria guzzling, tapas tasting, and windmill tilting to the sounds of **‘Ole Don Legsy’** is drawing to a close and you’re no doubt wondering whether the sounds of the west have managed to infiltrate this **flamenco stronghold**. Well fear not **vaqueros y vaqueras**, for Don L has still been able to conduct his **aural inquisition** into all that’s good and not so good in **el mundo de la musica** (and you are no doubt speechless at the mastery I now display of this most lyrical of languages!). And so, it matters not that **90%** of my **Spanish compatriots** do not speak the **Queen’s tongue** nor trade in like products, for the mighty god **Amazon** is always at hand to answer one’s prayers and assist with the Quest. Por lo que se puso un **sombrero**, calentar la **tortilla**, tomar un vaso de **vino blanco** rioja, y prepárate para escalar la montaña musical para **la segunda** edición del **Big Ones de LegsyBoy - ESTILO ESPAÑOL…….**

**ALBUM OF THE YEAR**

Music comes in all shapes and it’s easy to wallow in the deep and meaningful, the technically brilliant, and the familiar favourites. But sometimes we need to celebrate music for what it should always be about – a foot stomping, blissful celebration of living for the moment. For sheer unadulterated enjoyment, I have simply been unable to go past **“IN TIME”,** a **Tex-Mex opus** that shatters ten years of silence by **THE MAVERICKS**. **Raul Malo**’s **Big ‘O’** tinged vocals are a delight, the tunes surgically infiltrate the memory bank demanding you sing along, and the band swing like a door in a storm of **Katrina** proportions; this is the complete **‘good time’** package. Best of all, they backed it up on stage with a performance that left a permanent smile on the dial. I live to hear music that makes the hair stand up on the back of the neck; after I listen to this, you can call me **EchidnaBoy!**

But if you hanker for **‘serious’**, then check out what rounds out the **Top Ten**…..

**2.** **Richard Thompson – “Electric”** It’s simply not true that any new RT album is an automatic selection, but he does have a head start! Believe me though, this is one mighty fine album, full of his idiosyncratic take on rock, folk, and everything in between. As the title suggests, it is very electric, very dynamic, and finds the great man at the top of his game. Best of all, I got to see him play the album twice and if the chance ever presents itself to see him play live and electric, then do so. ***Magnificent***.

**3. Randall Bramblett – “The Bright Spots”** This record didn’t leave my turntable for 2 days. Scintillating collection of Americana tinged southern rock from the criminally overlooked song writer and multi-instrumentalist. Fans of **LBOG** should not hesitate to obtain this gem. You’ll be the coolest kid on the block overnight.

**4. Linda Thompson – “Won’t Be Long Now”** An intense fear of performing and **dysphonia** are two pretty big hurdles to overcome, but the former **Mrs RT** would leave even **Sally Pearson** in her wake with this. A truly outstanding family affair that features children, grandkids, friends and even the ex-husband, this is a mighty record of contemporary folk. Doubtful it will result in any live shows, but bask in the knowledge that one of the UK’s greatest folk singers is back with a vengeance.

**5. Roy Harper – “Man & Myth”** A long time LegsyBoy favourite, Roy has finally broken his silence after a **13 year hiatus** and the result is an album to match anything from his majestic 70s catalogue. He is both man and myth, and it’s clearly evident that turning 70 is no barrier to creativity. As incisive an album as you will hear this year, just don’t call it folk!

**6. Charles Bradley – “Victim Of Love”** The late discovered soul man delivers an extraordinary album that draws on 60s and 70 influences but makes them his own. His live shows at Jazzfest were raw, emotional and as powerful as any – and damned good fun to boot. If you have the slightest interest in soul, then don’t hesitate; it’s outstanding.

**7.**  **Iron And Wine – “Ghost On Ghost”** What an outstanding artist **Sam Beam** is; he simply gets better with each album. This is arguably his finest moment, and certainly one of his more low key releases. Melodic and instantly arresting, you won’t be disappointed, in fact you’ll have the lyric sheet out singing along almost immediately, trust me.

**8. Lori McKenna – “Masssachusetts”** In a very hot field, this is the best alt-country album I’ve heard this year. A desolate picture of a woman’s life in a small American town, her imagery is breathtaking. For some reason this is not a particularly easy record to procure, but the effort will be worth it. One listen to the opening song **‘Salt’** will have you hooked.

**9. Elvis Costello & The Roots – “Wise Up Ghost”** And he thought he had nothing more to say! ***KAPOW!*** Pairing up with the hip-hop kings has injected a vitriolic urgency into EC’s music that has been missing for a decade. Fear not, he doesn’t stoop to rapping, instead delivering a vintage vocal performance. EC’s aim is true on this.

**10. The Strypes – “Snapshot”** The irish teenagers deliver the goods. Sure, there’re some better albums that could have filled this spot, but these lads have absolutely nailed **the British 60’s R&B** and **Dr Feelgood** era pub rock. There are quality originals and a few covers, but what stands out is the sheer raw excitement of their sound. Be prepared for the opening – you may not recover by the end of the 40 minutes!

**RETRO TOP 10**

Time may ravage the person to differing degrees – have you seen any pics of **Mick’n’Keef** lately – but diamonds don’t fade and nor do their musical equivalents. Looking in the rear view mirror has been immensely pleasurable once again, and there have been many dusted off relics that have loomed large. What took me most by surprise, however, isn’t ***EXACTLY*** a re-release, but a release of demos, so I guess it still qualifies, seeing they’re the same songs. And I have come to the conclusion that worshiping at the **Gram Parsons** temple is futile, a waste of time, and putting him on a pedestal is crediting him way too much. Time would be far better spent listening to the equally troubled **GENE CLARK** striving to get the definitive versions down on **“Here Tonight: The White Light Demos”.** This is every bit as good as (in some instances better) the original masterpiece, and lays waste all the theories on who was the principal influence on country-rock – it sure as heck wasn’t GP, so **get over it Emmylou**!

**2. VA – “A Road Leading Home: Songs By Dan Penn”** A true immortal is **Dan Penn**. This is a companion to last year’s set dedicated to his output with **Spooner Oldham**, and it’s every inch as good. All 24 songs are household faves and the best thing is tht they’re mainly slightly more obscure versions that the hit versions you’re probably familiar with. Priceless stuff and totally essential.

**3. Fleetwood Mac – “Then Play On”** Their final album with **Peter Green** and therefore, by association, their last great record (don’t get me started on the latter day FM!!). This actually drifts away from the blues to a degree but contains some of their truly greatest moments – ***“you might not like the answer that I give to you, ooooooooh weeeellll”!!***

**4. Donovan – “Breezes Of Patchouli 1966-1969”** How cool is this. Sure, Don’s albums come out as regularly as the sun rises, but this collects all the albums together from his greatest period, with the obligatory accessories. Forget the trite Dylan comparisons, they were nothing alike; for a start, Donovan can sing and write good songs. He is one of my musical heroes, and he should be one of yours too. **Wear your love like heaven**….aaah!

**5. Otis Redding – “The Complete Stax/Volt Singles”** Spread over 3 discs, it is what it says, and collects every single released under his name. **Otis transcends genre**; he is simply one of the greatest. End of the sermon.

**6. Van Morrison – “Moondance”** Just brilliant. Everyone knows the title track, but I guarantee you will know the rest of this epic from the Belfast recalcitrant. Get the **2-disc** special edition unless you’re a serious Van completest; the 4-disc version contains multiple versions of each song when, let’s face it, the one perfect version is all you need.

**7. Jethro Tull – “Benefit”** Where Tull move right away from the blues. This special re-issue contains, as a bonus, my all-time favourite JT song – ***‘Teacher’*** – so it’s worth getting just for that. Besides that, it’s magnificent.

**8. Crosby, Stills & Nash – “CSN”** One could put forward an argument that they were the stand alone high point of the LA/west coast 70s sound. This monster contains all their truly sublime moments plus tons more and is a real bargain. Yes, there’s a few songs with Neil included, but they did their best work without him. It’s hard to believe that **The Hollies** knocked back **‘Marrakesh Express’**, but that’s show biz.

**9. Marianne Faithfull – “Broken English”** Look, let’s be honest, she’s an awful singer. But this album re-launched her career and harnessed her hoarse croak into an irresistible force of foul mouthed bitterness, literally spitting out her bile in unforgettable fashion. Cue the astonishing last track to have your ears pinned to the wall, and marvel at the fact that for one brief moment she really was a stunning singer.

**10. David Bowie – “Aladdin Sane”** There are others I could have stuck here but I’m really enjoying re-living the Bowie career. There are some outstanding moments here, and it means we’re edging closer to a re-release of **‘Station To Station’** which is when Don Legsy will ***REALLY*** get excited!

There you go, 20 ring-a-ding-ding classics for you to sink your teeth into. Trust me, you will be very popular if your loved one finds any of them in the stocking on the 25th! What of the rest I hear you ask….good question, so let’s jump straight into them, because there’s plenty of quality releases to consider……

**Popular and (sometimes) Worthy: A genre crossing selection that is worth drawing your attention to:**

**Abbe May – “Kiss My Apocalypse”** Frankly, there’s nothing else worth kissing on this ordinary affair. **Dismal**.

**Amy Speace – “How To Sleep In A Stormy Boat”** I toyed with putting this in the **Top 10**. Wonderful low key album from the gifted singer/songwriter, **breathtaking** in parts and one you won’t be sorry checking out.

**Anders Osborn – “Three Free Amigos”** Guitar pyrotechnics and drawn out jams at 30 paces – **yaaaaawn.**

**Broadcast – “Berberian Sound Studio”** Drivel.

**Devendra Banhart – “Mala”** Me myself personally, I’m not a fan, but if his take on alt-folky doodling has taken your fancy previously then I reckon you’ll like this. It’s OK.

**Devon Allman – “Turquoise”** Living off his surname. Next……….

**Dumpstaphunk – “Dirty Music”** Cracking band live, but don’t cut on vinyl, or CD in this instance. Come to think of it, can anyone name a consistently good Nawlinz funk album??

**Ed Harcourt – “Back Into The Woods”** Hey I really like this. I remember his debut album all those years ago, but he seemed to lose his way, until now. **Piano driven balladry** your thing? Then give Ed’s latest a go.

**Edwyn Collins – “Understated”** There are more important things happening in Edwyn’s life than making music, but this is an admirable serving of **Orange Juice** under testing times.

**Big Boy Bloater – “The World Explained”** Just what’s going on with the moniker. Fine guitarist and OK singer, but ditch the name please **Mr Bloater!!**

**Endless Boogie – “Long Island”** The name says it all. **Turgid.**

**Ethan Johns – “If Not Now Then When”** Producer belatedly turns his hand to making his own record. Pity; needs to stay behind, not in front of, the console.

**Glenn Jones – “My Garden State”** Unremarkable guitar instrumental album.

**Harper Simon – “Division Street”** Follow up to his impressive debut is not in the same category. Son of **Paul** has gone mainstream pop with disappointing results. Still sounds like dad though.

**Dawn McCarthy & Bonnie ‘Prince’ Billy – “What The Brothers Sang”** Sublime record that pays homage to the harmonic beauty of the **Everly Brothers**. One of my favourite records this year, and I’m not sure why it isn’t up the top.

**Shovels & Rope – “O Be Joyful”** This came out last year but I only got it this year. **Stunning album, aggressive alt-country at its best**. Probably would’ve been a **2012 Top 10** if I’d known about it.

**Jake Bugg – “Jake Bugg”** Refreshingly impressive debut from English teenager with undertones of **Donovan, Dylan**, and **Val Doonican** running through his songs. With sell-out tours around England and Europe, plus the likes of **Richard Hawley** singing his praises then it would seem the only way is up for Jake. I like this a lot.

**The Shouting Matches – “Grownass Man”** This is a **Justin Vernon**, aka **Bon Iver,** side project that is really good. Has a bit of a **Tom Petty feeling** to it, but there’s no mistaking who the singer is.

**David Egan – “David Egan”** This is a terrific set of songs from the acclaimed Louisiana songwriter and pianist in **LBOG**. Predominantly low key and beautifully executed, DE remains one of Louisiana’s best kept musical secrets, but is the equal of pretty much all the other more celebrated songwriters from the south.

**John Fullbright – “From The Ground Up”** This came through late last year and is mighty impressive. Americana with a cynical twist, Fullbright is one of the more literate young songwriters to appear, and this record is terrific.

**Josh Rouse – “The Happiness Waltz”** Went to the launch of this in Madrid and it’s a fine return to form for him. Reminiscent in sound to his **‘1972’** album, it’s full of sunshine west coast breeziness. Terrific stuff.

**Jeff Finlin – “My Moby Dick”** JF is one of my very favourite singers, and as good a writer of American narrative as there is. This is a mighty fine collection that yet again raises the question of why he isn’t a household name. Better than any recent **John Hiatt** album by a street.

**Cyril Neville – “Magic Honey”** Cyril should stick to being a Brother, or a Meter, or whatever, but give the solo stuff a miss.

**London Grammar – “If You Wait”** A nice debut from the London combo that has a kind of contemporary **Clannad** feel about it.

**Hiss Golden Messenger – “Haw”** Disappointingly forgettable follow up to last year’s brilliant **‘Poor Moon’**.

**Jason Isbell – “Southeastern”** And here’s an album where Jase gets some poo off his liver, although it’s apparently all a very positive thing. Actually, it’s pretty darned good, if confusing. Happy days apparently, but you wouldn’t know it from the feel of this one.

**Jim James – “Regions Of Light And Sound Of God”** Fabulous record that sat in my ‘very best’ pile for at least 6 months. This is actually his first solo album despite being highly prolific with **My Morning Jacket** and other projects, and has plenty of **Lennon overtones**.

**Joe Satriani – Unstoppable Momentum” Have Pyrotechics Will Travel**…..this is truly dreadful. Lightning fast – and soulless fingers.

**Johnny Hates Jazz – “Magnetized”**  I’ll bet he doesn’t hate jazz as much as I hate this record. Waste of time reforming.

**Johnny Marr – “The Messenger”** Talk about a waste of time…..in this instance one could be forgiven for shooting him.

**KT Tunstall – “Invisible Empire/Crescent Moon”** At last! After a stunning debut she has become less and less likeable as she seemed to seek crossover pop appeal. Back on the rails and this is a fine set – even if it is an exercise in relationship exorcism. Fortunately she doesn’t have the cynicism of Jason Isbell and this will return her to the upper echelon of Britt songbirds.

**Laura Mvula – “Sing To The Moon”** This lass from Birmingham sings like a bird but tends to over-sing on much of this. Tempering the delivery would help a great deal. Otherwise, she’s got it all and this is pretty good nonetheless.

**Luke Winslow-King – “The Coming Tide”** Wasted 20 minutes listening to this is the New Orleans Music Factory.

**Madeleine Peyroux – “The Blue Room”** Pedestrian.

**Nigel Kennedy – “Recital”** Haven’t listened to this I admit, but I’m sure it’ll be great. All his other albums are. For those who are unfamiliar, Nige’ is a violinist extraordinaire.

**Phosphorescent – “Muchacho”** I really like this dude. His Americana take is a little different and this album finds him a pretty good space. If you liked his previous set then jump in.

**Rick Redbeard – “No Selfish Heart”** An alt-folkie kind of Brit and this is pleasant without being outstanding.

**Rilo Kiley – “RKives”** A trawl through the archives for the band that was championed by **Elvis C**. Should have been bigger than they were.

**Rock Candy Funk Party – “We Want O Groove”** This is a **Joe Bonamassa** side project and there are moments where it really jumps out of the speakers. Based on this, I reckon Joe should give more consideration to funk. Nice record.

**Ron Sexsmith – “Forever Endeavour”** Must be one of the most prolific songwriters going round. This is his most consistent set for ages and has some really lovely slower moments. Try track 1 for size and you’ll know what I mean. Nice return to form.

**Shannon McNally – “Small Town Talk”** A tribute album to **Bobby Charles**. I’ve seen Shannon several times in **Nawlinz** and she’s only average, which is a step above this record.

**Simone Dinnerstein & Tift Merritt – “Night”** Surprisingly good pairing of the classical pianist with the singer/songwriter. The music is themed around the title and is very low key, and well worth a listen; genuinely surprised.

**Slide Brothers – “Robert Randolph Presents…”** I can dig one pedal steel, but when a room full of them is going at it full throttle, it’s just too, too much. It actually hurt my ears.

**Steve Lukather – “Transition”** Dismal. Even worse than any of the **Toto** albums he contributed to, and that’s saying something.

**Steve Mason – “Monkey Minds In The Devils Time”** The most interesting part of this was the sound bites between songs. Overall it was OK but you wouldn’t give it repeat plays.

**The Child Of Lov – “The Child Of Lov”** I asked EMI for a review copy ‘cos it sounded interesting. I’m still waiting, so TCOL can get stuffed.

**The Flaming Lips – “The Terror”** I never liked them before this album, and guess what – I still don’t. Horrible.

**Unknown Mortal Orchestra – “II”** I liked this. Plenty of Beatles influenced pop going on here and worth checking out.

**Vampire Weekend – “Modern Vampires Of The City”** I don’t really get the vampires. Competent and pleasant but hardly memorable.

**Van Dyke Parks – “Songs Cycled”** Just what is the point! The original is an overhyped pile of drivel, and it’s no better now.

**Wayne Hancock – “Ride”** Yeeee-ha, yeah baby. Wayne ‘The Train’ is in **red hot form** on this ring-a-ding-ding set of rockabilly cum country cum call it what you like. Highly infectious and highly recommended.

**Willie Nile – “American Ride”** This is his best effort for ages. I really like Willie’s Springsteen-ish take on rock’n’roll, and this will appeal to Boss fans.

**Yo La Tengo – “Fade”** Title pretty much describes their career. Shame really, they were really great once upon a time.

**Bill Frisell – “Big Sur”** Some nice picking pieces from the guitar maestro on a set of songs inspired by…..you can guess. Bill Frisell doesn’t make bad records.

**Blackmore’s Night – “Dancer And The Moon”** This really surprised me (pleasantly). I expected guitar pyrotechnics but instead got some kind of **renaissance/prog/folk**. I really enjoyed it.

**Buika – “La Noches Mas Larga” Spanish senora** with a cracking voice that won’t appeal to everyone. Just been on Jools Holland’s show and no, it isn’t all flamenco moaning.

**Dave Davies – “I Will Be Me”** Major disappointment but, really, I shouldn’t have been surprised. Unsuccessfully raids the **Kinks** canon for inspiration.

**Lloyd Cole – “Standards”** Lloyd’s gone back to lo-fi and I don’t like it. If you’re a Commotions fan then you probably WILL like it.

**Robin Bramlett – “This Is My Life”** Jazz bass player, but not really my scene. However, if **Jeff Beck** is looking for a new bass player then Robin ticks all the boxes.

**Sam Amidon – “Bright Sunny South”** He’s a mighty fine singer/songwriter and this should cement his reputation even more. There’s a lot of them out there but Sam’s right up there in the Americana stakes.

**The Milk Carton Kids – “The Ash & Clay”** Very nice harmony pop a-la **The Everly Brothers** without the energy, or more pertinently, **Simon & Garfunkel** without the songs (or talent?). It’s pretty nice, in a bland sort of way.

**Fat Freddy’s Drop – “Blackbird”** Kiwi reggae men who seem to have lost their way on this album. Shame, ‘cos they’re much better than this.

**The Duckworth Lewis Method – “Sticky Wicket”** It worked first time round, but I’m afraid this time they’ve had their middle stump uprooted without playing a shot.

**Trampled Under Foot – “Badlands”** Mundane.

**Caro Emerald – “The Shocking Miss Emerald”** Caro is a **Dutch vamp** who can really sing, although it’s not really my cup of tea. The cover gives the game away.

**Paul Thorn – “Pimps & Preachers”** Nuh.

**I See Hawks In L.A. – “Mystery Drug”** ….and all I hear is crap in L.A.

**Over The Rhine – “Meet Me At The Edge Of The World”** This is a double album that would have been a seriously good single set. Lovely singing and playing throughout but just meanders too much.

**The Lee Thompson Ska Orchestra – “The Benevolence Of Sister Mary Ignatius”** Former **‘nutty boy’** pays tribute to **60’s Jamaica**. Should have left well enough alone if you ask me.

**Laua Veirs – “Warp & Weft”** Gets lots of good reviews but I find her Americana warbling unremarkable. I won’t listen again.

**The Rides – “Can’t Get Enough” Steven Stills** tries to re-create his past with mixed results. It’s actually better than his recent solo albums, so at least that’s something.

**Moreland & Arbuckle – “7 Cities”** I enjoyed this from memory, but damned if I can remember why, and I don’t have time to play it again.

**Hillbilly Moon Explosion – “Damn Right Honey!”** Awful. Great cover though (which obviously attracted me in the first place).

**Neko Case – “The Worse Things Get, The Harder I Fight, The Harder I Fight, The More I Love You”** The title is only marginally more inane than the music, and what is it that makes singers feel the need to swear all the time??

**Roddy Woomble – “Listen To Keep”** Scottish alt-folkie with a great ear for a melody, and this album is no exception. One of Scotland’s better kept secrets, I recommend you sound this out.

**Darden Smith – “Love Calling”** I love Darden Smith’s approach to Americana. Great voice and thoughtful songwriter, this one goes on a tad long though – I think love overstayed its welcome just a little, but he’s a quality act.

**The Rich Morton Sound – “The Sequel That Never Was” STUPENDOUSLY** original instrumental album**.** An album of film and TV themes for sequels that don’t exist – **brilliant.** There’s even scripts and casts; all it needs is someone to make the movies!

**Stornoway – “Tales From Terra Firma”** Totally unmemorable.

**Heidi Talbot – “Angels Without Wings”** Too winsome for my liking.

**Barb Jungr – “Stockport To Memphis”** Basically, this is a cabaret singer seeking credibility. She can certainly sing, but should really stick to what she does best. And it helps to have actually been there if one is going to sing about Memphis!

**Chris Stamey – “Lovesick Blues”** Fine guitarist that he is, there’s nothing that grabs you by he throat on this.

**The Polyphonic Spree – “Yes, It’s True”** You either dig this massed choral stuff or you don’t – I don’t.

**Chris Thile – “Bach Sonatas & Partitas Vol. 1”** The **bluegrass mandolin maestro** turns his attention to the classics – literally. It takes some getting used to but there’s no doubting his dexterity on these pieces originally written for violin. ‘Culture’ is what it is.

**John Lennon McCullagh – “North South Divide”** A lad who grew up in Oz but has since returned to England and is trying to forge a career as a **Dylan inspired folkie** type. But really, what were his parents thinking when it came time to name him!!

**Preservation Hall Jazz Band – “That’s It!”** Mighty fine set of originals from the **New Orleans** jazzmen. One of the **Lonely Planet ‘1000 things you must do’** is see the PHJB in action; ticked that box and this is as close as it gets if you haven’t been.

**Johnny Dowd – “Do The Gargon”** A genuine one-off, but this time Johnny’s overstretched a fair degree and misses the mark by a fair distance.

**Bill Kirchen – “Seeds And Stems”** The **Titan Of The Telecaster** reimagines his most popular tunes from the last 40 years and this is a mighty **twangfest**. Not many albums were better fun to listen to than this in 2013.

**Matthew E. White – “Big Inner”** What a debut. A kind of **gothic southern soul** that will leave you either entranced or estranged. I’m in the former camp, and this is one of the year’s major album highlights.

**Thea Gilmore – “Regardless”** Another from the Brit singer/songwriter stable. She’s been around a while now and her output has been variable. This is something like a return to form. One of the more individual English singers going round.

**Tommy Malone – “Natural Born Days”** The **subdudes** lead man delivers the best **post-Katrina homage to New Orleans.** There are few more soulful voices than Tommy’s and this is a cracking record, not far of the TT.

**Robert Randolph & The Family Band – “Lickety Split”** Hooley dooley, does RR ever rest. Higly prolific, and this is by some distance his best for ages. Screaming pedal steel may not be your cup of java but he keeps a tight lid on it and this record ***ROCKS!***

**Sheryl Crow – “Feels Like Home”** Deplorable.

**Okkervil River – “The Silver Gymnasium”** This is a very 80s sound for OR, and it took a couple of listens but the persistence paid off. It’s really quite impressive.

**The Greencards – “Sweetheart Of The Sun”** Texas based Australian/English **prog bluegrass trio** who deserve much higher acclaim than they’ve received. Don’t let the bluegrass tag concern you, they’re just lovely to listen to. **Recommended.**

**Josh Ritter – “Beast In Its Tracks”** This is where Josh vents his spleen regarding his obviously messy relationship breakdown. The thing is, I don’t care about that (no disrespect), but I do care about the music – and it’s **FANTASTIC!**

**Low – “The Invisible Way”** A slowcore atmospheric triumph from the Minnesota trio. There are noticeable changes in direction (presuming you’re familiar with their earlier works) that show that even after 20 years there are ways to do things differently. Have a listen.

**Black Joe Lewis – “Electric Slave”** He’s ditched the **Honeybears** for this album – ***BAD MOVE!*** The raw excitement and energy of his previous 2 albums is replaced with a wall of noise (as opposed to sound). Major disappointment…..

**Bill Callahan – “Dream River”** …but this isn’t. BC just gets better and his velvet baritone gets lower with each album. There are some glorious moments on this slice of heavy lo-fi. The best thing he ever did was drop the Smog sobriquet, because as Bill Callahan he just gets better and better.

**Gregory Porter – “Liquid Spirit”** He’s a mighty fine **jazz/soul** singer, and very popular right now. **Nat Cole** influences abound, and that’s no bad thing, so if that’s your liking then check him out.

**Mazzy Star – “Seasons Of Your Day”** The only thing that saves this from total disaster is a guest spot by the late **Bert Jansch**, and he should’ve known better!

**Pink Martini – “Get Happy”** Cabaret dross.

**Anna Calvi – “One Breath”** Dramatic young UK singer who is everybody’s flavour of the month. But this didn’t reach the heights of her debut I’m afraid. Great voice though…..

**Volcano Choir – “Repave”** This is a **Justin Vernon (Bon Iver)** side project that simply doesn’t have enough legs. There are some nice moments, but…..

**Andy Fairweather Low & The Low Riders – “Zone-O-Tone”** Highly entertaining set from the **Welsh** wonder boy of the sixties. There’s been lots worse than this in 2013, but it will sadly and unfairly drop off the earth’s edge.

**The Leisure Society – “Alone Aboard The Ark”** Straight out of the **Belle & Sebastian** school of melodic indie pop, TLS is yet to make a bad record and this hasn’t blotted the copybook at all. Standout track is **‘All I Have Seen’** – terrific.

**Eliza Doolittle – “In Your Hands”** It worked first time round, but the Cockney voice needs better material to hold interest. Eliza may need a career change.

**Garland Jeffreys – “Truth Serum”** GJ is a musical warrior, and this record finds the New Yorker still pushing rock boundaries. He’s been at it for nearly **40 years** and still sounds fresh. One of the year’s more pleasant surprises.

**Prefab Sprout – “Crimson/Red”** Nice but unremarkable.

**North Mississippi Allstars – “World Boogie Is Coming”** It is what it says it is. It’s almost like an 80 minute jam, and that’s about 77 minutes too long for me.

**Diane Birch – “Speak A Little Louder”** I was terribly disappointed with this after such an extraordinary debut. But maybe I need to listen to this one a bit more, so I’m reserving judgement. It’s only just come out as I write this.

**Alvin Lee – “The Last Show”** Alvin’s last appearance on stage. Nothing remarkable, but thanks for the memories.

**Barrence Whitfield & The Savages – “Dig Thy Savage Soul”** On the comeback trail, this is a mighty fine set of rock’n’soul by the man with the **BIG** voice. This is how Joe Lewis should have sounded.

**The Silver Seas – “Alaska”** Not in the same league as their **2011 AOTY** (not many are), but nonetheless they have an uncanny flair for catchy west coast influence indie-pop. There would be plenty of bands happy to have recorded this.

**Willy Mason – “Carry On**” Excellent singer/songwriter who has had to live up to all sorts of comparisons that drove him from the music business. Fortunately he has overcome the and this is one of the year’s finest acoustic American albums. Highly recommended.

**Pond – “Hobo Rocket”** An offshoot of **Tame Impala** and not that different really. I prefer this to TI, but in reality I don’t like either.

**Don Walker – “Hully Gully”** Just sneaks in as **Oz AOTY**. The former Chisel writes some great songs, and even if he does sound and look like **Nick Lowe**, this is a consistently good album – better than anything Chisel or Barnesy ever did, then again pretty much anything is!

**Dave Brewer – “Night Walkin’”** A toss up really as to this being Oz AOTY. **Fabulous,** soulful and bluesy, the former **Dynamic Hepnotic** is right at the top of his game both in writing and playing.

**Bruce Mathiske – “My Life”** I’m only gonna say this one more time….Tommy Emmanuel isn’t in the same league let alone ball park as Mathiske. Superb originals and a couple of covers by the guitar guru.

**Lisa Miller – “Meet The Misses”** A re-imagining of the best stuff from her hard to find early albums, this is really very good. One of Oz’s better female singers and this just serves to remind how good those earlier records were.

**Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds – “Push The Sky Away”** I simply don’t get Nick Cave. He can thank Dave Graney from stopping him being the most overrated singer in Australia.

**Tedeschi Trucks Band – “Made Up Mind”** Sorry, but I find the TTB utterly pointless and bereft of any vitality or originality. Probably puts me in a minority, but there you go…

**Laura Marling – “Once I Was An Eagle”** One of the leading lights in young UK singer /songwriters, and still just a baby. This is a great record but such is the standard she has set for herself that it doesn’t measure up to her previous 2 albums – and I don’t care what anyone say, she still sounds like **Joni Mitchell**.

**Trombone Shorty – “Say That To Say This”** *Weeeell*, it’s OK. Bottom line is, I defy anyone to name a consistently great **Nawlinz funk** album, and this won’t aid the cause. It has some terrific moments, but when it should soar it recants into mediocrity.

**Jonathan Wilson – “Fanfare”** The **King of Laurel Canyon** comes back with help from west coast heavies. It’s enjoyable but not in the same league as his debut. Just when he sounds like he’s getting interesting he retreats into the **CSN** harmony stuff.

**Dirt Music: Where Americana, Country, Western, Folk, and all points in between kicks up a storm:**

**Charlie Landsborough – “Silhouette”** Welsh cowboy’s latest effort is fairly ‘big hat’ but pleasant.

**Gordon Giltrap & Oliver Wakeman – “Ravens Lullabies”** This guitar fest wasn’t bad, but I reckon GG should have paired up with **RICK**, now that would’ve been an eye watering matchup!

**Harry Manx – “Om Sweet Ohm”** Harry’s slant on eastern music meets the blues has never appealed to me previously, but I actually enjoyed this a lot. Qualifies as **worst album title of the year** though…

**Kim Richey – “Thorn In My Heart”** Not unpleasant country, but too bland for me.

**Martha Tilston – “Machines Of Love And Grace”** Steve’s little girl continues her run of excellent releases, but like her dad I think she’s destined for a career below the radar. She deserves much better.

**Natalie Maines – “Mother”** Controversial former **Dixie Chick**’s solo debut has its moments, but you’re behind the 8-ball from the outset when you cover Lennon’s oedipal opus, let alone naming the album after it!

**Rokia Traore – “Beautiful Africa”** Further evidence that I’m not really into African music.

**Steve Martin & Edie Brickell – “Love Has Come For You”** As a comedian he makes a very fine banjo player. Here he teams up with **Mrs Paul Simon**, and if you are even remotely interested in bluegrass then you should divert your attention to this. Much better than anything Mr Brickell’s put out in recent years.

**The Handsome family – “Wilderness”** I love Rennie and Brett, but I struggle to remember anything memorable on this. Must have another listen, ‘cos I’m sure there is.

**V/A – “Son Of Rogues Gallery: Pirate Ballads, Sea Songs & Chanteys”** Volume 1 was passable, but this is just plain ordinary. Mostly has-beens or never-wases embarrassing themselves singing she shanties. Aaaaaaargh…..Uuuuuuuurgh.

**Ashley Monroe – “Like A Rose”** Too cheesy for me.

**Michael Martin Murphy – “Red River Drifter”** Remember **‘Wildfire’**? I confess I’m still a sucker for that song, and it still brings a lump to my throat. Well this brought a lump to my throat too, but luckily I kept it down!

**Sarah Lee Guthrie & Johnny Irion – “Wassaic Way”** Woody’s granddaughter and partner deliver some pleasant but largely underwhelming moments on their latest. Worth a listen though, just no spark.

**Vince Gill & Paul Franklin – “Bakersfield”** This is a beauty for anyone who loves **Merle** or the **Bakersfield** sound. It zings and twangs all over the place – yeeehaa!!

**Boy & Bear – “Harlequin Dream”** Totally forgettable.

**Shannon McNally – “Small Town Talk”** I saw her perform songs from this **Bobby Charles** tribute album live earlier this year. Credit where it’s due – both were equally awful.

**Lau – “Race The Loser”** Scottish folk supergroup deliver the goods. Fear not, there’re no Donalds losing trousers here, just quality contemporary folk. Have a listen.

**Tift Merritt – “Traveling Alone”** I like Tift, and I really like this countrified gem. She also put out a duet album with classical pianist Simone Dinnerstein which is also fabulous.

**Jim Malcolm – “Disaster For Scotland”** Jim is Scotland’s very best kept secret, something I’m sure he wishes could be remedied. Blessed with the most honeyed of Scottish burrs, this is an album of light hearted musings. You really should check out the back catalogue.

**Anais Mitchell & Jefferson Hamer – “Child Ballads”** You only have to go back to last year to find out what I think of Anais Mitchell – stunningly original and a **Top Ten** album. Here she tackles a set of folk standards which is good but not of the standard set last year. The reality is, she has set herself an unrealistically high bar to clear.

**Martin Simpson – “Vagrant Stanzas”** Talk about overlooked, Simpson is one of the UK’s very finest ‘folk’ musicians, make that musicians period. This excellent record crosses into acoustic blues and other areas with nonchalant ease. He is a superstar, except most people don’t know of him……

**Zachary Richard – “Le Fou”** …whereas this man is a household name in **Canada, France and New Orleans.** This is a stomping **Nawlinz r’n’b** record that is his finest for a long time. You don’t need to speak French to dig it, trust me.

**Alela Diane – “About Farewell”** Gorgeous. Such a beautiful voice, and a set of low key country tunes deserving of her talent. You won’t forget her once you’ve listened to her singing.

**V/A – “Ghost Brothers Of Darkland County”** This is terrific. The soundtrack to a southern gothic stage play written by **Steven King** and featuring some great artists singing the roles. **Dave Alvin, Rosanne Cash, Elvis Costello, Richard Thomspon** and others make this a memorable album – wouldn’t mind seeing the show.

**Aoife O’Donovan – “Fossils”** Another girl who was close to the head of the country and bluegrass queue when they handed out talent. The less said about her Christian name though, the better.

**Steep Canyon Rangers – “Tell The Ones I Love”** Terrific album from Steve Martin’s backing band. If they can manage to break out of his shadow then the world will realise they’re a whole lot better than that.

**Scud Mountain Boys – “Do You Love The Sun”** The **Felice** boys go back in time but this doesn’t really set the world on fire.

**Danny & The Champions Of The World – “Stay True”** After a couple of false starts, Aussie expat Danny is back on top of his game, the world if you will. A very tasteful take on alt-country, showing the Yankees how to do it.

**Quercus – “Quercus”** Simply brilliant. This is **folk/jazz** fusion by a trio that includes saxophonist **Iain Bellamy**, pianist **Huw Warren**, and the peerless singing of **June Tabor**. Allow Elvis Costello to sum her up: **“If you don’t like listening to June Tabor then you should stop listening to music.”** Says it all really…hello? Hello? Anyone out there??

**Clannad – “Nadur”** I loved their early stuff. This is OK but nothing too adventurous and lacks the ethereal qualities of their greater moments.

**Terry Allen – “Bottom Of The World”** The **Texan maverick** certainly does things his own way, and this is another essential addition to his canon of twisted country. A true one off, you really must check him out.

**Diana Jones – “Museum Of Appalachia Recordings”** This won’t be for everybody but, guess what, it is for me. Possessed with one of the most identifiable and haunting voices you’re likely to hear, this is a beautiful collection of self-penned **bluegrass** tunes that will send a tingle up your spine. Be warned – if you listen to this then be prepared to concede that there really is something in bluegrass. And you’ll never forget her voice.

**Caitlin Rose – “The Stand-In”** Wonderful album of country-pop from the **Nashville** girl. Not too sweet and she sings like an angel. You’ll never listen to Kasey Chambers again after hearing this – you shouldn’t be listening to her now, truth be told!

**Ruth Moody – “These Wilder Things”** Ah yes, another absolute beauty from the member of the **Wailin’ Jennies**. Beautiful country/folk delivered with her tremulous voice. Her interpretation of a Springsteen song is worth the entry price alone.

**Laura Cantrell – “No Way There From Here”** First listen and I was ambivalent, second listen it was OK, third listen it was unforgettable. Let it sink in and you will be rewarded. This is a truly superb record and Laura Cantrell should be a megastar, but you can’t vote for her on X Factor I’m afraid.

**Son Volt – “Honky Tonk”** Until now I preferred **Wilco**, but Son Volt has stolen their alt-country limelight from under their noses. This is a cracking record with hints of **Bakersfield** all over it. If you like Wilco, then try it out. Once you do, there’s no going back.

**Patty Griffin – “American Kid”** Sycophants of the world unite. Just ‘cos she’s **Robert Plant**’s main squeeze doesn’t mean you have to gush about a product that is plain average. Even the great man’s appearance on a couple of songs can’t raise the bar too high. Always felt she’s been overrated (but does play a very good foil as a backing singer to RP).

**Soul & Blues: It’s about quality not quantity this year.**

**Ana Popovic – “Can You Stand The Heat”** She’s one mighty **hot lookin’** gal and can play a **mean blues guitar**. She was most impressive at JazzFest in that little (very little) red number. As for the album, well she looks really good on the cover….

**Ben Harper & Charlie Musselwhite – “Get Up!”** I’ not much of a BH fan I confess, actually not at all. Charlie Musselwhite’s pretty cool though, after all, he’s lived it. This is OK but not really great.

**Bonnie Raitt – “What About Love”** This does nothing to enhance her reputation (not that it needs to be enhanced). Pass.

**Joe Bonamassa – “An Acoustic Evening At The Vienna Opera House”**  You’d think he’d get sick of making records! This is a double live set that is by definition a lot more laid back than usual. Nothing ground breaking.

**John Lee Hooker Jr – “All Hooked Up”** Refer the next album…..

**Mud Morganfield – “The Blues Is In My Blood”** Living off daddy’s name just doesn’t cut it. I’ve just read the **Muddy Waters** biog **‘Can’t Be Satisfied’** (newly updated) and the interesting thing is that Mud (or his real name Larry) is given no credence within its pages. Still, Muddy wasn’t known as the “father” of Chicago blues for nothing!!

**Mick Hucknall – “American Soul”** I was a great **Simply Red** fan, especially the first four albums. Here Mick pays genuine tribute to his major influences, but it’s surprisingly too limp for my liking.

**Otis Taylor – “My World Is Gone”**  **Drone blues** is an acquired taste. If you dig it then Otis is your man. I didn’t mind this.

**The James Hunter Six – “Minute By Minute”** James’ classy **Sam Cooke** chops are a delight on this. He must be one of the UK’s finest singers and although his albums tend to have a sameness about them, they all have the word **‘quality’** emblazoned on them.

**Mavis Staples – “One True Vine”** This is a fine album, but I can’t listen to it too often. She has such a **BIG** voice that subtlety is hard to achieve. Still, she is one of the truly great gospel singers of all time.

**Too Slim & The Taildraggers – “Blue Heart”** No frills here folks, this is rotgut barroom blues and it’s terrific. Amazingly, they’ve been doing it for over 20 years, but it sounds as fresh as tomorrow.

**Walter Trout – “Luther’s Blues”** Affectionate tribute from one blues guitar hero to his major influence. There’s nothing fishy about this record, and there’s ample evidence that **white boys CAN** play the blues (even if it is someone else’s).

**Watermelon Slim & The Workers – “Bull Goose Rooster”** A most welcome return to form from Slim that happens to coincide with him saddling up with The Workers again after a lengthy hiatus. Spirited blues all the way through – and very loud!

**Buddy Guy – “Rhythm & Blues”** One of the greats, and one of the few surviving. This is double album of pretty consistent stuff. Fabulous guitarist, great singer and good songs average out as very good overall.

**Rory Block – “A Tribute To Mississippi John Hurt”** Here is one of my ‘female blues artists’ poster girls. This is what it says it is, and Rory (yes, **she’s a she**) is a mighty fine acoustic blues picker. **BUT**, I don’t care which gal we’re talking about, they all come unstuck at a specific point, and that is when they try to **sing** the blues. It’s like reading a map; gals are simply not hot-wired to sing the blues, whereas they have a mortgage on tortured alt-country.

**Dana Fuchs – “Bliss Avenue”** And here’s another case for the prosecution, this time electric blues. Ho Hum….

**Johnny Sansone – Once It Gets Started”** New Orleans **blues harp** player who is an honest singer without being fantastic. Despite falling over in the quagmire at JazzFest, he staunchly soldiered on and signed my copy of his latest, so Johnny gets a pass.

**John Fohl – “Teeth And Bones”** Fine album from, until recently, **Dr John’s guitarist**. There’s a strong Nawlinz r&b feel, hardly surprising I guess.

**Doghouse Sam & His Magnatones – “Buddha Blue”** Sorry, I can’t recall a single note of this one.

**The Mighty Mojos – “Hook Line And Sinker”** A polished set of standards and covers from experienced **Belfast bluesmen**. There aren’t any surprises (it is blues after all) but it’s expertly played and as good as most this year.

**The Relatives – “The Electric Word” Magic**. A bunch of **septuagenarians** who’ve been slogging away for an eternity, whilst moonlighting as **preachers**. They convert the **gospel into sanctified soul** and the **psychedelic Temptations** era bits are particularly outstanding.

**Seasick Steve – “Hubcap Music”** You know what to expect and Steve doesn’t let you down with a full band featuring the mighty **John Paul Jones**. Anyone who makes a guitar out of a hubcap deserves your attention. As raw as blues sounds.

**Billy Boy Arnold – “Sings Big Bill Broonzy”** Like Buddy Guy, BBA has been there and done it, and this is an affectionate tribute to one of the giants (in every sense) of the genre, and BB’s greatest influence. Some lovely harp on a predominantly acoustic blues set.

**Lady – “Lady”** This is a mighty fine 70s soul influenced album by **two** chicas from either side of the Atlantic. Why they’re not called **Ladies** escapes me, but worth checking out if you like this kind of retro sound – I do.

**Bobby Rush – “Down In Louisiana”** If he’d made this album 20 years ago then chances are he’d be much bigger than he is. Tough **Louisiana blues** from a fine guitarist and one of the best blues albums this year.

**James Cotton – “Cotton Mouth Man”** A living legend and former **Muddy Waters sideman,** James blows his harp throughout with distinction but illness has taken its toll and he uses an array of guest vocalists. This wasn’t far off making the TT, so if you favour the blues in any way at all, check it out. And remember, there’s not many of the original Chicago electric blues men left.

**Hans Theessink – “Wishing Well”** He’s a mighty fine musician, but this mainly acoustic blues set left me underwhelmed. No doubt his next album will be a blinder (you could almost put money on it).

**Giovanca – “Satellite Love”** Sultry late night soul in the Sade mould. Very, very nice indeed.

**Alice Russell – “To Dust”** The **finest soul singer in the UK**, in fact I could mount an argument that she’s better than **Amy Winehouse** was. This album’s a bit inconsistent it has to be said, but man, she can really sing.

**Valerie June – “Pushin’ Against A Stone”** Perhaps it’s my cloth ears that stop me from wallowing in platitudes, but this is terrible. Coming on something like **Eartha Kitt** on a bad day singing something loosely resembling soul, you’ll have a hard time justifying the $20 outlay for this.

**Heritage and Household Names: You know who they are and what they sound like, so here’s the lowdown on their latest and greatest (or ‘not so’):**

**Adam Ant – “Is The Blueblack Hussar In Marrying The Gunners”** The music is as ridiculous as the title suggests.

**Eric Clapton – “Old Sock”** Jeez, if only he’d put one in it!

**Willie Nelson & Family – “Let’s Face The Music And Dance”/ “To All The Girls…”** Two albums in one year – come on Willie, give it a rest. Time to hang up **Trigger,** for everyone’s sake. Once again, he was **diabolical at JazzFest**, but the audience **LOVED HIM**…go figure!

**Booker T Jones – “Sound The Alarm”** No Cropper, no Duck, no Al means no good!

**Georgie Fame – “Lost In A Lover’s Dream”** One of my **musical heroes** is Georgie. This is OK without ever reaching high spots.

**Hugh Laurie – “Didn’t It Rain”** As a blues pianist he makes a great house doctor. **Physician, heal thyself**!

**Aaron Neville – My True Story** The big guy’s tribute to do wop has some really nice moments (‘**Gypsy Woman’** is fab) but it lacks oomph! Surprising really, ‘cos when he’s with **‘the brothers’,** it’s never an issue.

**Guy Clark – “My Favorite Picture Of You”** The old outlaw may have trouble spelling ‘favourite’, but he doesn’t struggle with song writing, even in his twilight years. This is one of the country albums of the year. **Superb.**

**Steve Earle & The Dukes – “The Low Highway”** You know what to expect from the Texan troubadour and he doesn’t disappoint.

**Glen Campbell – “See You There”** Leftovers from his last sessions, but these updated versions of his standards miss the mark on most occasions. Great catalogue though.

**Emmylou Harris & Rodney Crowell – “Old Yellow Moon”** Their first genuine duets album together after all these years is very good, but does not rise to the heights of greatness. There’s a case to be made that both have passed their zenith, which still puts them ahead of most in the pack.

**Jimmy Webb – “Still Within The Sound Of My Voice”** Hit and miss selection of duets covering his back catalogue. They’re all great songs, but Jimmy seems to be making a living off slicing and dicing them. When it comes to having **Keith Urban** as a guest then it’s time to draw line in the sand!

**Peter Gabriel – “And I’ll Scratch Yours”** Payback time. On his last album, PG covered songs by other artists he admired, and now comes the reciprocal trade-off where they record one of his songs. Interesting idea, and it works surprisingly well. Much better than his covers of their songs I have to say.

**Sting – “The Last Ship”** And its name is **The Hesperus**!

**Tony Joe White – “Hoodoo”** Love the sound, the swamp rock and that southern groove. But it has to be said that Tone’s albums all sound the same and consist of one tune with different words. Still pretty **sassy** though.

**Earth Wind & Fire – “Now, Then & Forever”** Seriously, I did listen to this. Why, exactly, is anyone’s guess! **Horrid.**

**Ry Cooder & Corridos Formosos – “Live In San Francisco”** Amazingly, only his 2nd live album and it’s pretty darned good too. It’s certainly better than the political dross he’s been trying to ram down our throats in more recent times.

**Big Country – “The Journey”** Reformed for no apparent good reason.

**Harry Connick Jr – “Smokey Mary”** A **love letter to New Orleans** (did you know he was a NO native?). Harry’s jazzy piano chops lack gravitas and it’s (not totally surprising) a little too smooooth for me. If you like him then you will **LOVE** this.

**Jimmy Buffett – “Songs From St Somewhere”** Jimmy’s had a few too many pina coladas methinks.

**Status Quo – “Bula Quo!”** This is pretty much the soundtrack to a new movie. It’s OK, but a long way removed from the halcyon days of ‘**Piledriver**’.

**The Bryan Ferry Orchestra – “The Jazz Age” WARNING** – this is an instrumental album of **Roxy Music classics** played a-la the 1920’s. Sacrilege really, especially seeing he actually wrote them!

**Rod Stewart – “Time”** Finally, the old rooster has left the American Songbook to those who can actually do it justice and returned to more familiar rock terrain. Thank goodness for that, ‘cos this is actually surprisingly good…..no, really, it is.

**Petula Clark – “Lost In You”** This isn’t!

**Justin Hayward – “Spirits Of The Western Sky”** Oh dear, or this.

**John Fogerty – “Wrote A Song For Everyone”** Fogerty hacks to death his own songbook. This is terrible.

**Jimi Hendrix – “People, Hell & Angels”** For completists only, although it’s quite good.

**J.J. Cale – “In Session At The Paradise Studio”** Late and lamented, but not for this live album I’m afraid.

**Robin Trower – “Roots And Branches”** British guitar hero stretches out with some really excellent performances, particularly on his own material. **Recommended.**

**Elton John – “The Diving Board”** This will take you back to **‘Honky Chateau’** days, presuming you want to…

**Delbert McClinton & Glenn Clark – “Blind, Crippled & Crazy”** Two venerable **Texan R&B** men come together after an eternity in a fine set of Texas blues and r’n’b. Best of all, you can hear that they’re **having a ball**, as it should be.

**Graham Parker & The Rumour – “Three Chords Good”** Brilliant stuff this. GP and the lads back together after **32 years** and it sounds like they never went away. They should have been as big as **Costello**. And if you haven’t seen a film called **‘This Is 40’** then do so immediately – a must see. It’s hilarious and features GP playing himself in several self-deprecating scenes.

**B.J. Thomas – “The Living Room Sessions”** A few too many raindrops have fallen on the barnet I think.

**Black Sabbath – “13” Ozzie, Tony and Geezer** unleash hell all over again. Great stuff, not quite up to the halcyon days of the first 4 records, although this samples quite a bit from those days. Get it.

**Kenny Rogers – “You Can’t Make Old Friends”** The gambler whips up a storm with a whole bunch of different chicas. He’ll probably win a Grammy for this, given they usually go to those underserving of the accolade.

**Boz Scaggs – “Memphis”** I was very pleasantly surprised by this when it came out. Boz channels **Al Green** and sings up a whole mess of covers recorded…well, you can guess where…but on subsequent listens I think he’s wrung the life out of the songs. It’s just a little too laid back. Boz fans shouldn’t hesitate though.

**Eric Burdon – ‘Til Your River Runs Dry”** Yes folks, he’s still alive and very much kicking. The legendary septuagenarian sings up a storm on this mighty fine rock’n’roll record. I nearly slipped him in a-la **Ian Hunter** last year. I’d love to hear him sing **Sky Pilot** again!

**Nick Lowe – “Quality Street”** Now everybody has an excuse to throw out their **Bing and Nat** Xmas records. A seasonal release for the times – **brilliant.**

**Paul McCartney – “New”** I’ve played this a dozen times and still I wait for a memorable tune to emerge. It’s over Fab Macca, face it. The only people who say they like this are sycophants like Jools Holland. If Lennon was alive he’d revisit the pig foto!

**David Bowie – “The Next Day”** Lots of critical praise for the **Thin White Duke**’s latest, but it left me feeling lukewarm. I much prefer his reissue programme – check out the top of this epistle.

**From The Vaults: For better or worse, dredged up, regurgitated, strung together, or simply unearthed, these are the sounds of yesterday refreshed for today’s ears:**

**Glenn Cardier – “Old Haunts: The Lost Songs 1972-1979”** If you have even the remotest interest in **Australian** music then you should have this. The tapes were thought to be unusable, so revel in the discovery of a **genuine lost treasure** that fills in a lot of the gaps in GC’s musical career (the first time round). We’ve produced no better singer/songwriter.

**Blue Oyster Cult – “The Complete Columbia Albums”** Worth it just for ‘**Don’t Fear The Reaper’.**

**Country Joe & The Fish – “Electric Music For The Mind And Body”** Overrated and over bloated. This is their **San Francisco psychedelic ‘opus’** pre-dating the equally dire folk protest stuff.

**Duane Allman – “Skydog: The DA Retrospective”** Amazingly good and comprehensive anthology of the great guitarist’s career. You should have this (all 7 discs!).

**Jennifer Warnes – “Jennifer”** Great voice and this dates back to when she was still associated with **Leonard Cohen**. Material’s a little up and down.

**Lee Fields – “Let’s Talk It Over”** Retro soul. You either dig it or you don’t.

**Paul McCartney – “Wings Over America”** I got this hoping they may have edited Linda out of the mix, but no. Still, it’s certainly better I remember it first time around, and is a quantum leap better than Fab Macca’s recent output.

**R.E.M. – “Green”** Never did like REM and still don’t.

**Stephen Stills – “Carry On”** This is a very good set of 4 discs covering all his incarnations. If you get the CSN retrospective you may not need this though.

**Stevie Ray Vaughan & Double Trouble – “Texas Flood”**  The ‘big break’ album with a bonus disc of live performances. I happen to prefer the live stuff.

**Taj Mahal – “The Complete Columbia Albums”** 15 discs in this little baby and it spans studio, live and soundtrack albums. Some are great, some are awful, but he’s never less than interesting.

**The Black Crowes – “Wiser For The Time”** Should have been called **‘waste of time’**.

**Bennett Brubeck – “The White House Sessions 1962”** Legendary concert and upon listening it’s easy to understand why. Wouldn’t it be cool to be able to have whoever you want come and play just for you – not sure I’d pick Tony and Dave though!!

**James Brown – “Best Of Live At The Apollo” BRILLIANT.** This is a **50th anniversary** special edition that acts as a showcase of all the Apollo gigs.

**Peter Bruntnell – “Retrospective”** Under-appreciated Brit singer/songwriter gets the career retrospective even though most people wouldn’t know of him. It’s also just a tad long.

**Charley Pride – “40 Years Of Pride”** Self-explanatory really. Hey, did you happen…

**VA – “Classic Americana Vol.2”** Forget the title. Like its predecessor, this is really a collection of late 60s and early 70s west coast pop – and it’s **GREAT!** There are some genuine treats to be found here amongst the usual suspects.

**Doc Watson – “The Definitive”** Genius. I can’t play a note with eyesight, yet Doc could do it all and he was as blind as a bat! If he could see I reckon he would’ve found the lost chord.

**Stan Getz – “Jazz Samba & Big Band Bossa Nova”** If you dig ‘**The Girl From Ipanema’** then you may well like this 2-fer filled with similar latin sounds.

**Johnny Winter And – “Live At The Fillmore East 10/3/70”** Turn this one up loud and watch the wallpaper fall off. **Fabo!!**

**Elvis Presley – “Elvis At Stax”** This is a mighty fine set with significant historic relevance as they were his last studio recordings, and all done in the unusual location of Stax studios. There’s plenty of dialogue to digest and it’s all very entertaining.

**Bob Dylan – “Another Self Portrait: The Bootleg Series Vol.10” Disgraceful**. **Self Portrait** was pilloried by everyone upon release for good reason. Adding studio offtakes etc doesn’t change things, the album still stinks. You cannot polish a turd.

**Syreeta – “Syreeta” Mrs Stevie Wonder**’s first album without his input, although a couple of tracks are her own versions of songs she wrote for hubbie.

**Louisiana Red – “When My Mama Was Living”** If you have even a passing interest in blues then you should grab this. This is the kind of re-release that makes it worthwhile.

**Wanda Jackson – “Rockin’ With Wanda Jackson”** But this one doesn’t.

**Swamp Dogg – “Total Destruction To Your Mind”** Proceed with caution. The Dogg is an acquired taste and this hasn’t travelled too well.

**Lynsey de Paul – “Into My Music 1975-1979”** She was more than just a pretty face and this compilation emphasises that. You may remember **‘Sugar Me’** but there’s a lot more to her than that.

**Los Brincos – “Contrabando”** They were the biggest thing since **uncrusted** bread in Spain during the 60s, the **Spanish Beatles** if you will, and even young kids today still speak in awe of them. Ole!

**VA – “Sweet Dreams: Where Country Meets Soul Vol.2”** Maybe not quite as good as the first compilation but nonetheless just as essential. It’s all about bona fide soul singers singing country songs and it’s brilliant.

**Tom Jans – “Loving Arms: Best Of 1971-1982”** A ‘lost’ singer/songwriter given a long overdue reissue from an Australian label no less. Worth checking out.

**Serge Gainsbourg – “Intoxicated Man 1958-1962”** You all know who he is. This is his very early stuff. One listen will, of course, have you gasping for more.

**Link Wray – “Rumble & Roll”** Yes, the great man is on this record, but it’s a shameful piece of twisting the truth. **WARNING** – this is not a Link Wray album, so don’t expect to hear the guitar pyrotechnics you may hope for.

**The Anita Kerr Singers – “The Genius In Harmony”** When you hear those hits from the late **50s and 60s** that came from **Nashville**, chances are these singers were the backing vocalists. They were genuine ground breakers in the development of the Nashville sound and whilst it may sound syrupy these days, it is still historically significant.

**Molly Drake – “Molly Drake”** Private tapes of **Nick’s mum** that will extinguish any continuing discussion on who influenced him. For Nick collectors, but an intriguing listen all the same.

**Ravi Shankar – “A Life In Music”** If you don’t like **Indian sitar** music then steer clear. This is a retrospective of recordings from the late 50/early 60s by the late master.

**Jerry Butler – “Love’s On The Menu/Suite For The Single Girl”** The **Iceman** is one of my favourite singers but these 70s albums leave a fair bit to desired.

**Donna Washington – “Going For The Glow”** Passable 70s soul reissue, but there’s much better out there.

**Lena Hughes – “Queen Of The Flat Top Guitar”** Fascinating aural document of the legendary **hillbilly guitarist**. The only existing recordings of her.

**Bobby Whitlock – “Where There’s A Will There’s A Way”** This is a long overdue release of his first two albums and they are mighty fine records. Great songs, great piano, great vocals from the former **Domino and Friend**. You should have this.

**Belle & Sebastian – “Third Eye Centre”** An album of outtakes, offtakes, B sides etc dating back to 2000. Interesting, but really only for **B&A fanatics**.

**Dave Edmunds – “Subtle As A Flying Mallet”** You’ve gotta get this. Such a great musician and this album is pretty much a one man effort. Long been unavailable in Australia, he creates almost perfect renditions of 60s staples with a touch of **Phil Spector**. And of course, he’s a great guitarist in his own right.

**Ray Charles – “Modern Sounds In Country & Western Music Vol.1 & 2”** Where it all started. Of course, you will already have at least the first volume on vinyl, but these belong on the shelf of any self-respecting musicologist.

**The Spencer Davis Group – “Keep On Running”** There’s lots of similar compilations, but this one uses alternate takes and TV performances. With **Steve Winwood** out front, it’s always going to be nothing less than good.

**Fleetwood Mac – “Rumours”** This is a superb package of one of the biggest selling albums of all time. My only issue is that they continued using the name when it all ended for blues lovers in 1969. Refer to the Retro Top Ten!

**Townes Van Zandt – “Sunshine Boy: The Unheard Studio Sessions & Demos 1971-72”** I don’t know how they keep managing to turn up ‘lost’ recordings, but these are pretty special I have to say. Stripped down to just TVZ and his geee-tah, they are every bit as powerful as the finished products.

**Ray Stinnett – “A Fire Somewhere”** This is a **genuine lost treasure** by the former guitarist for **Sam the Sham & The Pharoahs**. A fine collection of country rock that somehow missed out on being released first time around. Forty years on – better late than never.

**Pavlov’s Dog – “Pampered Menial”** Outstanding album bordering on **prog**….OK, it is prog. **David Surkamp**’s falsetto vocals are extraordinary and the immortal **‘Julia’** is just one of many highlights. **Essential purchase**.

**Bert Jansch – “Heartbreak”** Not his greatest album by any means, but consistent and worth having if you don’t already, particularly for the bonus material. Acoustic folk guitarists didn’t, and don’t, get any better than Bert.

**Rodriguez – “Searching For Sugar Man”** The soundtrack to the outstanding Oscar winning documentary about the man everybody now knows about. If it were me though, I’d get the remastered versions of his two albums instead of this.

**Bo Diddley – “The Indispensable: 1955-1960”** Title sums it up nicely.

**The Sugar Shoppe – “The Sugar Shoppe”** I’d never heard of these **Canadians** before and they disappeared almost without trace. There was only room for one west coast sounding quartet featuring 2 men and 2 chicas in the 60s, and the **Mamas & Papas** got there first. This is an excellent album though.

**Bobby Womack – “Everything’s Gonna Be Alright – The American Singles 1967-1976”** A double album covering all his A & B sides for the period. Some of it misses the mark but in his heyday he was an amazing interpreter and grossly under-appreciated guitarist.

**Michael Chapman – “Wrecked Again”** A long time LegsyBoy favourite, this is his 2nd album beautifully remastered with some bonuses thrown in. Of course, you don’t need any bonus tracks because the original album is stand-alone brilliant. For those who don’t know, he’s somewhere undefined between folk and rock, a **British national treasure**.

**The Allman Brothers Band – “Brothers & Sisters”** Expanded edition of the brothers’ commercial highpoint, featuring **‘Jessica’ and ‘Rambling Man’**. The only Allmans album I consistently like all the way through.

**Glen Campbell & Jimmy Webb – “In Session” This is glorious**. Two old boys, well not so old when this was originally recorded, with nothing but a piano and an acoustic guitar, ripping down memory lane. It is truly superb, and the accompanying **DVD** is equally as good.

**Lee Hazlewood – “Trouble Is A Lonesome Town” & “A House Safe For Tigers”** Wonderfully left of centre country from the great man. Trouble is a concept album of sorts, and Tiger a soundtrack not previously easily sourced, so both are welcome additions. It mightn’t be the best place to start listening to Lee, but for anyone at all familiar with his body of work, you’ll love these.

**Kirsty MacColl – “A New England”** A fine retrospective of the late British singer’s amazing back catalogue. Revered in England but curiously less so elsewhere, you may be persuaded if you have a listen.

**Hot Sauce featuring Rhonda Washington – “Good Woman Turned Bad”** Here’s another album that got swallowed up in the 70’s only to get a release now. Rhonda was the lead singer but did a **‘Diana Ross’** on Hot Sauce, and for good reason. She’s one hell of a singer and it’s a travesty that her record company’s financial demise buried this at the time.

**The Sutherland Brothers Band – “The Sutherland Brothers Band”** Someone I know who has impeccable musical taste (other than she can’t tell the difference between **Calexico and The Mavericks**!) reckons the opening track on this debut album, i.e. **‘The Pie’**, is the greatest song ever recorded. Reason alone for you to check it out.

**Basia – “Time And Tide”** Remember **Matt Bianco** in the mid-80s? Basia was their singer and then went solo with this super-duper offering. Very 80s but oh so good, and what an amazing voice she had. What ever happened to????

**Johnny Cash – “LIFE Unheard”** There’s plenty of Cash stuff to delve into so it has to be special to attract interest. This is, as it is filled with some excellent alternate versions of his biggies. One more time with Johnny isn’t that bad after all.

**George Jones – “The Complete United Artists Solo Singles”** The title tells it all again. Considered the greatest country singer ever, the irony is that this set just scrapes the surface of his recording career. If you don’t like country then steer right away.

**Rod Stewart – “Rarities”** Great stuff – surprisingly. This is a double set that goes right back to the early days and is filled with demos and alternate takes that are a genuine revelation. He really could sing once upon a time.

**VA – “Nile Rodgers Presents The Chic Organisation”** Chic, Sister sledge, Diana, etc – they’re all here. Disco mother lode spread over 2 discs.

**Sly & The Family Stone – “Higher!”** Includes five discs and is good but not great. If you’re a Sly fan then get the three actual albums (***Life, Stand, There’s a Riot Goin’ On***) and you’ve got everything you need.

**Denise LaSalle – “Making A Good Thing Better”** A sadly overlooked soul songbird who deserves your attention. Beautiful stuff.

**Allen Toussaint – “Songbook”** Re-workings of the back catalogue, but you don’t really need it. Presumably you’ve heard them all before.

**The Boomtown Rats – “Back To Boomtown”** Ample proof that **Bob Geldof** and his band were, with one exception, seriously overrated. Light the fuse and run…..

**Dwight Yoakam – “21st Century Hits”** Superb collection of 14 tracks drawn from his five albums since 2000. Modern day **Bakersfield Sound** at its best.

**Bobby ‘Blue’ Bland – “Absolutely Essential”** Stellar three discs covering the early part of his career. Just a shame there’s absolutely no liner notes.

**The Band – “Live At The Academy of Music 1971”** This is superb. Originally released as a 2-disc set called **Rock Of Ages**, this is the whole shebang spread over four discs. Can one ever get enough of The Band (rhetorical question!)?

**The Who – “Tommy”** Really great packaging, sound and loads of extras, but do you really need yet another version of el mundo’s most famous rock opera?

**Eliza Carthy – “Wayward Daughter”** She’s a national treasure (indeed her whole family is) and this is a wonderful 2-disc retrospective of the folk fiddler/vocalist with more than a touch of ‘alt’ I her. Be careful, one listen to this and you just may utter the words ***‘I like folk music’.*** You have been warned.

**Mary Wells – “Something New: Motown Lost & Found”** We only know her courtesy of **‘My Guy’**, but she was once **Motown’s biggest star**. An indispensable 2-disc treasure trove.

**Albert King – “Born Under A Bad Sign”** One of the great blues albums from a man often overlooked in favour of BB (no relation). The title track is, of course, immortal, but the rest is just as good.

**Son House – “Father Of The Delta Blues – The Complete 1965 Sessions”** Recorded after a lengthy hiatus from not just recording but music itself, one listen will explain why he was such a giant influence on pretty much **EVERY** bluesman. Acoustic blues doesn’t get any better than Son House.

**The Clash – “Hit Back”** This is a 2-disc comp that has everything you need. The playlist is based around the band’s live set list as opposed to chronological. You could go for the full version in the boom box packaging, but I reckon there was a lot of filler on their albums, so stick to this one.

**Margret Roadknight – “Decade ‘75-‘84”** An acquired taste perhaps, but a pivotal artist in the mid/late 70s. A superb interpreter, you will no doubt remember her biggie – **‘Girls In Our Town’.**

**Yawn!!: There’s a heck of a lot of records I hear and a heck of a lot that I simply don’t get to the end of, for obvious reasons. No elaboration on these and try them if you must but, really, life’s too short……**

**Biffy Clyro – “Opposites”**

**Charlie Winston – “Running Still”**

**Dawes – “Stories Don’t End”**

**Deadstring Brothers – “Cannery Row”**

**Della Mae – “This World Oft Can Be”**

**EELS – “Wonderful, Glorious”**

**I Am Kloot – “Let It All In”**

**Ian McCulloch – “Holy Ghosts”**

**Jessica Pratt – “Jessica Pratt”**

**Night Moves – “Colored Emotions”**

**Ocean Colour Scene – “Painting”**

**Phoenix – “Bankrupt!”**

**Lenka – “Shadows”**

**Stereophonics – “Graffiti On The Train”**

**Steve Case – “Somewhere Where I’m Not”**

**The Besnard Lakes – “Until In Excess, Imperceptible UFO”**

**The Pastels – “Slow Summits”**

**The Red Paintings – “The Revolution Is Never Coming”**

**The Rockingbirds – “The Return Of…”**

**Rogue Wave – “Nightingale Floors”**

**The Solicitors – “Made To measure”**

**Jonny Fritz – “Dad Country”**

**Nataly Dawn – “How I Knew Her”**

**Robben Ford – “Bringing It Back Home”**

**Paper Aeroplanes – “Little Letters”**

**Holly Williams – “The Highway”**

**J. Roddy Walston & The Business – “Essential Tremors”**

**Paper Kites – “States”**

**Shannon Whitworth – “High Tide”**

**The Wild Feathers – “The Wild Feathers”**

**Parlour Flames – “Parlour Flames”**

**Ducktails – “The Flower Lane”**

**“Que Es Esta Mierda?” Award:**

It pains me to write this as I believe it may be the first occasion when I handed this dubious honour to an Australian artiste, indeed – **ICON!** However this needs to be said. Straight to the point – **“Swing”** is the latest album from **Renee Geyer** and it is ***deplorable***. **BUT**, let me qualify that; the playing on the record is exemplary, the music and production sounds fabulous. The issue is that Renee’s singing, something I truly admired especially through the 70s, is simply unlistenable as she ***TORTURES*** a set of blues and soul standards with vocal contortions that, if it were you or me, would have us booked in somewhere for emergency surgery. For goodness sake Renee, just sing the song next time!

**KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCKIN’ ON HEAVEN’S DOOR: A final salute to those who have served across all forms of entertainment. Muchas gracias…..**

Dave Brubeck, Ed Cassidy (Spirit), Ravi Shankar, Tony Charlton, Koko (aka ‘Red Dog’), Jimmy McCracklin, Lee Dorman (Iron Butterfly), Charles Durning, Jack Klugman, Fontella Bass, General Norman Schwarzkopf, Tony Greig, Christopher Martin-Jenkins, Patti Page, John Wilkinson (Elvis’ rhythm guitarist), Precious Bryant, Rusi Surti, Fred Flanagan, Chucho Castillo, Peter van der Merwe, Graeme Fellowes, Leroy Bonner (Ohio Players), Patricia Lovell, Ann Rabson, Cecil Womack, Donald Byrd, Reg Presley, Kevin Peek, ick Huxley (Dave Clark 5), Shadow Morton, Tony Sheridan, Kevin Ayers, Magic Slim, Cleotha Staples, Neil Mann, Dale Robertson, Richard Street (The Temptations), Bobby Rogers (The Miracles), Alvin Lee, Kenny Ball, Peter Banks (Yes), Clive Burr (Iron Maiden), **Raton** (Spanish fighting bull aged 11 – the lucky one!), Phil Ramone, Andy Johns, Annette Funicello, Margaret Thatcher, Jimmy Dawkins, Cordell Mosson (Funkadelic), Mike Denness, Chrissy Amphlett, Richie Havens, Bob Brozman, Johnny Lockwood (remember Aldo Godolfus in Number 96??), Deanna Durbin, Storm Thorgerson (album cover designer), George Jones, Greg Quill, Penne Hackforth-Jones, Ray Manzarek, Trevor Bolder (Bowie, Uriah Heep), Hazel Hawke, Marshall Lytle (Bill Haley & The Comets), Bill Pertwee, Marvin Junior (The Dells – what a singer!), Mandawuy Yunupingu, Bill Peach, Deacon Jones, Joey Covington (Jefferson Airplane), Esther Williams, James Gandolfini, Slim Whitman, Wendy Saddington, **BOBBY “BLUE” BLAND**, Alan Myers (Devo), Peter Lehmann, Gary Shearston, Poncie Ponce, Mel Smith, JJ Cale, Michael Ansara (remember Cochise in ‘Broken Arrow’?), **BILL PUTT**, George Duke, Eydie Gorme, Tompall Glaser, Sir David Frost, Cowboy Jack Clement, Keith Dunstan, Jackie Lomax, Bernie McGann, Ken Norton, John Hipwell, Tom Clancy, Philip Chevron (Pogues), Chopper Read, Gypie Mayo (Dr. Feelgood), Lou Reed, Peter Haycock (Climax Blues Band).

So gringos, there you have it. The curtain is rapidly coming down on a momentous year for the LegsyBoys. Spain is a wonderful country and our door is open for anyone wishing to come and enjoy its many virtues(spots are filling up!). The **snow** is falling on the distant hills, the **arbol de navidad** is up with all it’s lovely decorations, and los ninos are gearing up for the arrival of **Papa Noel** (me too – I believe!). And so, just like last year, may I simply say to you all…….

**Que la alegria de estas fiestas perdure todo el ano.**

**FELIZ NAVIDAD QUERIDOS AMIGOS**

**Todo nestro amor………..DON LEGSYBOY de la MANCHA**