

ROCK BEAT



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FREE



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Reviews

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NEWS BEAT

Shane MacGowan

Shane MacGowan, singer and songwriter with the Pogues, died on November 30, 2023 at age 65.

MacGowan was born in Kent, England on December 25, 1957, but spent his early childhood in Tipperary, Ireland. When MacGowan was six, he moved with his family to London. In the mid-seventies, using the name Shane O'Hooligan, MacGowan became a fixture on London's burgeoning punk rock scene. He published the zine *Bondage* and, with his friend Shanne Bradley, formed the band, the Nipple Erectors (later shortened to the Nips), best known for the song "Gabrielle."

In 1982, MacGowan formed Pogue Mahone with Spider Stacy on tin whistle, Jem Finer on banjo, and James Fearnley on accordion. They subsequently added Cait O'Riordan on bass and Andrew Rankin on drums. The band played their first gig at the Pindar of Wakefield in King's Cross on October 2, 1982. In 1983, they independently released their first single, "The Dark Streets of London." The band then signed to Stiff Records and shortened their name to the Pogues. Their debut album, *Red Roses for Me*, was released in 1984. The band went on to release four more albums - *Rum, Sodomy & the Lash* (1985), *If I Should Fall from Grace with God* (1988), *Peace and Love* (1989), and *Hell's Ditch* (1990). MacGowan wrote many classic songs for the Pogues, including including "Streams of



Shane MacGowan. (Andy Catlin, courtesy Warner Bros. Records.)

Whisky," "The Sick Bed of Cuchulainn," "A Pair of Brown Eyes," "Sally MacLennane," "Rainy Night in Soho," "If I Should Fall from Grace with God," and "A Fairly Tale of New York."

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MacGown had long had serious problems with drug and alcohol dependency. During a 1991 tour of Japan, the other members of the Pogues kicked MacGowan out of the band due to his erratic behavior and failure to show up for concerts and rehearsals.

After parting company with the Pogues, MacGowan formed a new band called Shane MacGowan and the Popes, with whom he recorded the albums *The Snake* (1995), *The Crock of Gold* (1997), and *Across the Broad Atlantic* (2002)

The Pogues reunited in 2001 to perform some Christmas concerts in the UK. They remained together and toured fairly regularly for several years, but did not record any new material.

In recent years, MacGowan was in ill health and had been hospitalized for viral encephalitis.

Prior to MacGowan's funeral, his coffin was carried through the streets of Dublin on a horse-drawn, glass-sided carriage while thousands of people lined the streets to pay their last respects.

Now Available: A Lonely Journey's End, the new book in the Oceanic Park mystery series!



A Lonely Journey's End: An Oceanic Park Mystery

By Geoff Cabin

Sun, sand, and surf meet intrigue and murder when Ned Johnston and Sophia Ambrosetti return in the second book in the Oceanic Park mystery series.

It's summer again in Oceanic Park. After the tumultuous events of the previous year, small-town attorney Ned Johnston is back to his usual summer routine of hanging out at Java Joe's Coffee cafe, surfing the 21st Street beach break, and listening to music at the Crow's Nest. At the same time, Johnston is torn between anticipating and dreading the return of Sophia Ambrosetti, the musician and investigator with whom he had worked the previous summer.

Meanwhile, the summer season in Oceanic Park is roiled by anti-immigrant tensions. A group calling itself the Oceanic Park Vigilantes is conducting an anti-immigrant flyer campaign, and an abrasive talk-show host named Walter Braddock is using his show as a platform for spreading inflammatory anti-immigrant rhetoric. When the anti-immigrant campaign turns deadly, Johnston undertakes an investigation. As the investigation progresses, it reveals that nothing is as it appeared at first and ultimately leads to a series of startling discoveries.

"...*A Lonely Journey's End: An Oceanic Park Mystery* is a must-read thriller you won't be able to put down. The twists and turns in the narrative, the socially relevant themes which play on in our own society, and the shocking cliffhanger finale will keep readers hanging onto the very edge of their seat." *Pacific Book Review*

"The highlight of Cabin's novel is the depiction of Oceanic Park as a place that feels real and lived in. The story also successfully captures the tumultuous post-9/11 politics of the George W. Bush era." *Kirkus Reviews*

For more information, visit geoffcabin.com.

Surf Beat

By Terry Wilson

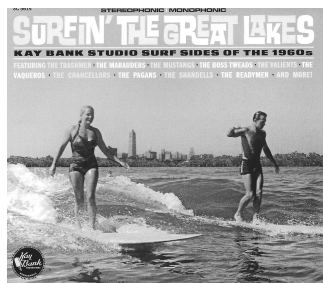


Surf Beat '23 is the debut album by Los Grainders, a young, surf-guitar band from Mexico City, and it's an excellent debut. The band plays in a traditional surf-music style with clean guitar sounds and they demonstrate strong ensemble playing throughout the album.

Among the highlights of the album are "Sharp Stone," which alternates rumbling riffs on the bass strings of the guitar with rapid-fire picking on the treble strings; "Escondido," a mid-tempo rocker with a catchy melody; "Santa Ana Winds," a moody, atmospheric number with lots of drippy reverb; and "Shell Pink," which combines an infectious melody with a propulsive rhythm.

With *Surf Beat '23*, Los Grainders have established themselves as one of the most promising new bands on the surf music scene.

(losgrainderssurf.bandcamp.com)



In the early '60s, Kay Bank Recordings in Minneapolis became well known as the place where hits such as "Surfin' Bird" by the Trashmen, "Liar, Liar" by the Castaways, and "Six Days on the Road" by Dave Dudley were

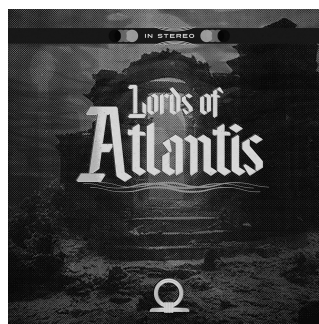
recorded. The studio's reputation attracted bands from the surrounding Midwest region who came to try their luck at recording some songs. *Surfin' the Great Lakes* presents a selection of surf-and-garage-oriented numbers recorded by various bands at Kay Bank Recordings between June 1964 and August 1966.

One of the highlights of the album is "Jonah" by the Vaqueros, which features melodic guitar lines and is driven by crisp, propulsive drumming. "Disintegration" by the Readymen shows a strong Dick Dale influence with rapid-fire picking over a hard-driving

beat. The Satisfactions turn in a neat cover of the Beach Boys' "Girl Don't Tell Me," with an arrangement that features some ear-catching whistling. The Chancellors provide a raucous cover of "Surf Beat," while the Trashmen contribute a rocking, surfified version of "Greensleeves." "Za Boo" by the Valients features twangy guitar, honking saxophone, and frat-rock organ. The Valients also turn in a catchy vocal number, "Beach Girl," which, despite the subject matter, is closer to rockabilly than surf music. There are numerous other interesting tracks and the package is rounded out by informative liner notes by surf music historian John Blair.

All in all, *Surfing the Great Lakes* is an interesting and enjoyable collection of surf-and-garage-related rarities,

(sundazed.com)



Lords of Atlantis are a new band comprised of four veterans of the surf music scene - guitarist Ivan Prongracic (Space Cossacks, the Madeira), guitarist Jeremy Dehart (the Manakooras, Aqualads), bassist Jonpaul Balak (Insect Surfers, Tikiyaki

Orchestra), and drummer Dane Carter (the Madeira). The band's self-titled, debut album has recently been released and it's a real stunner. On the album, the band shows strong songwriting skills and impressive instrumental prowess and demonstrates the wide range of musical styles that can be encompassed within surf music.

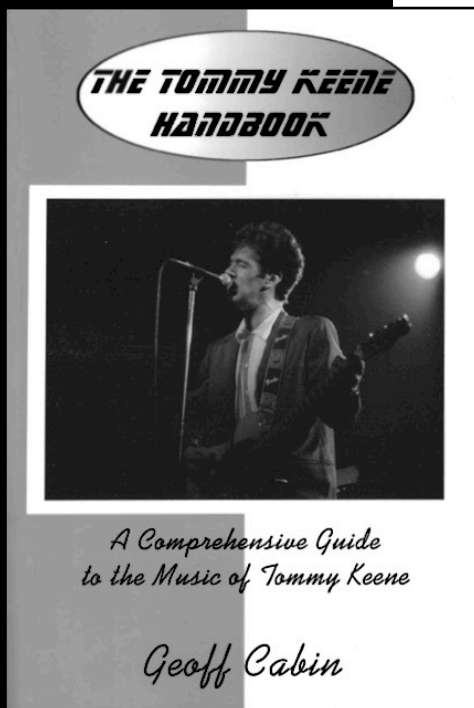
Listening to this album is a bit like embarking on a musical journey that takes you from the sands of the Sahara desert to the shoreline of Barbary coast to the depths of Atlantis. On "Libertas!," the band sets breezy, catchy melodies to a pulsating rhythm. "Long Live the King," is powered by heavy, fuzzed-out guitar chords and rumbling runs on the bass strings of the guitar. The band employs a sinister spy sound on "Eye of the Sahara." Also in the spy vein is their cover of the Shadows' "Maroc 7," with reverbed guitar lines set to a

galloping beat. "Seaglass" is a slow number with lyrical guitar lines over a relaxed rhythm. On "The Bastion," the band sets ringing guitar riffs and chords to a Bo Diddley-style beat. "Barbary Corsairs" and "Atlas" both have a strong Middle Eastern flavor. The album-closing number, "Sands of Mauritania," features flowing, melodic guitar lines over a percolating groove.

This is a really fantastic album; it's not just one of the best surf albums of the year but one of the best albums overall.

(taburecordings.bandcamp.com)

The Tommy Keene Handbook



The Tommy Keene Handbook is a comprehensive reference guide to the music of underground pop-rock legend Tommy Keene, including:

- **Musical History:** an overview of Tommy Keene's musical career from his days as a member of the Rage, Razz, and the Pieces through his work as a solo artist in 2006;
- **Bibliography:** an extensive listing of articles, interviews, reviews, websites, and other resources regarding the music of Tommy Keene;
- **Annotated Discography:** a comprehensive discography for 1979 - 2006 that covers all of Tommy Keene's work as a solo artist as well as his work as a sideman, producer, and member of Razz and the Keene Brothers;
- **Annotated Gig List:** an extensive list of gigs by Tommy Keene from the debut of the Tommy Keene Group in August 1981 through tour dates in 2006

For more information, visit geoffcabin.com.

The History of Rock 'n' Roll: Part 10

By Geoff Cabin

The North (continued)

John Lee Hooker

Another Mississippian who made the journey north was John Lee Hooker. Hooker was born into a large sharecropping family on a farm near Clarksdale, Mississippi.¹ The date of Hooker's birth is somewhat uncertain, but August 22, 1917 is the date that his family gave following his death.²

Hooker's father was a minister and his mother was active in the church and Hooker got his first singing experience in the church.³ After Hooker's parents split up, his mother married Willie Moore, a well-known local blues guitarist who sometimes played with Charlie Patton.⁴ Moore, who played loosely-structured, one-chord drone blues, encouraged Hooker's interest in blues and gave him lessons on the guitar.⁵ The influence of Moore's style of playing can be heard in Hooker's music.

Hooker's mother disapproved of him playing the blues and, as a result, Hooker left home at about age 14 and moved to Memphis.⁶ "She didn't want me to play no blues...and I done put the guitar on my back and I split," Hooker said.⁷ In Memphis, Hooker worked as an usher at the W.C. Handy Theater on Beale Street and played blues at house parties.⁸

After about three years in Memphis, Hooker moved to Cincinnati, where he continued to play the blues and also worked with gospel groups like the Big Six, the Delta Big Four, and the Fairfield Four.⁹

Around 1943, Hooker moved to Detroit.¹⁰ While working a variety of day jobs, he gigged at clubs along Hastings Street, which was the center of the blues scene in Detroit.¹¹ The owner of a local record store, Elmer Barbee, heard Hooker perform and liked one of his songs, "Sally Mae."¹² Barbee had a makeshift recording studio in the back room of his record store and he recorded a demo of Hooker performing "Sally Mae."¹³ Hooker took the demo of "Sally Mae" to Bernard Besman, a local record distributor and owner of the Sensation label.¹⁴ Besman arranged for Hooker to go into United Sound Studios to make a proper recording of "Sally Mae."¹⁵ In addition to recording "Sally Mae," Hooker recorded a couple of other songs including "Boogie Chillen."¹⁶

Rather than release Hooker's songs on his own Sensation label, Besman took the tapes to Modern Records, a larger independent label based in Los



John Lee Hooker at Massey Hall, Toronto, August 20, 1978. (Jean-Luc Ourlin, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons.)

Angeles and run by Saul, Jules, and Joe Bihari.¹⁷ In late 1948, Modern released "Boogie Chillen" / "Sally Mae" as Hooker's first record.¹⁸ "Boogie Chillen" became an immediate hit, going to number one on the national rhythm and blues charts in early 1949.¹⁹

On "Boogie Chillen," Hooker laid down his distinctive one-chord boogie rhythm on the guitar while stomping his foot on a plank of wood. "Hard blues, they ain't got no changes," Hooker explained. "I mostly play one chord, E or A. 'Boogie Chillen' I did in A."²⁰ In the song, Hooker recounts walking down Hastings Street in Detroit, entering Henry's Swing Club, and then shouts "Boogie Chillen." "Hastings was *the* street in Detroit then," Hooker said. "Henry's was *the* club...It was such

a big famous street, famous nightclub, I said, 'I'll write a number so people'll know what I'm talking about.'"²¹

Over the next couple of years, Hooker scored a string of hits on the r&b charts with "Hobo Blues," "Hoogie Boogie," "Crawling King Snake Blues," and "Huckle Up, Baby" (his attempt to cash in on the "Hucklebuck" craze).²²

At the same time that Hooker was recording for Modern, he recorded for numerous other labels such as Acorn, De Luxe, Gotham, Fortune, Regent, Savoy, King, Gone, and Staff under a wide variety of pseudonyms including John Lee Booker, John Lee Cooker, The Boogie Man, Birmingham Sam, Texas Slim, Johnny Williams, Poor Slim, Poor Joe, and Delta John.²³

"I was the hottest blues singer when I got my foot in the door with, like, 'Boogie Chillen,' 'In the Mood,' 'Hobo Blues,' 'Crawlin' King Snake,'" Hooker explained. "Everything I did just turned to gold. I had this manager, Elmer Barbee, and all of these record companies would come to him. They said, 'This kid got something so different.' And I was under contract with Modern Records in L.A., and they was crooked - some of the biggest crooks ever lived. So Barbee would come to me late at night and say, 'Man, I got a deal! This record company wants to do something with you. I know you under contract but we can change your name.' I said, 'I don't care,' and this kept going on. Every different little record company would come to me, and I'd say, 'Call me what you want to - as long as you got the money.' They did give me a name and I went into the studio late at night."²⁴

In the fall of 1951, Hooker hit number one on the r&b charts for a second time with "I'm in the Mood," which also crossed over to the pop charts.²⁵ The song featured Hooker's echo-laden vocals over a slow-burning shuffle rhythm accompanied by Eddie Kirkland on second guitar.

In 1955, Hooker signed to Vee Jay Records.²⁶ During this time he started to record with other musicians and adopt more of a contemporary, full-band sound. Hooker continued to score hits on Vee Jay with "I Love You Honey" and "No Shoes."²⁷

In the summer of 1962, Hooker scored a final big hit on the r&b charts with "Boom Boom," which also crossed over to the pop charts and became one of Hooker's signature songs.²⁸ The song was a hard-rocking number with stop-time verses backed by a band that included piano and saxophone.

Hooker stayed with Vee Jay until the label ran into financial problems in 1964.²⁹ He subsequently recorded for a variety of labels including Chess, Wand, ABC Bluesway, and Tomato.³⁰

During the folk revival of the early '60s, Hooker reinvented himself as a folk bluesman and played the coffeehouse circuit.³¹ In the mid-sixties, the British Invasion helped to introduce Hooker to the rock 'n' roll audience. In 1965, the Animals scored a hit with

a cover of "Boom Boom," and the song has since become a staple of rock 'n' roll bands. In the later years of his life, Hooker became more popular than ever and was recognized as an elder statesman of the blues. Hooker continued to record and perform until his death on June 21, 2001.

Atlantic Records

New York emerged as another important recording center for the new rhythm and blues music, due in part to the founding of Atlantic Records by Ahmet Ertegun and Herb Abramson in October 1947.³²

Ahmet Ertegun was the son of Munir Ertegun, the Turkish ambassador to the United States from 1934 to 1944.³³ Ahmet and his brother Nusuhi had developed a passion for American music after seeing Cab Calloway and Duke Ellington perform at the London Palladium when their father was stationed in England.³⁴ When their father was posted to Washington, DC, the Ertegun brothers pursued their interest in American music by visiting jazz clubs on U Street and record stores on Seventh Street and by hosting jazz concerts at the Turkish embassy.³⁵

Following Munir Ertegun's death in November 1944, his wife and daughter returned to Turkey, but Ahmet and Neshui opted to remain in the U.S.³⁶ Ahmet ostensibly remained in Washington, D.C. to work on a PhD at Georgetown University, but spent much of his time hanging around Max Silverman's Quality Music Shop, more popularly known as Waxie Maxie's.³⁷

After learning what he could about the music business from hanging around Waxie Maxie's, Ertegun decided to start his own record company. Ertegun began by obtaining financial backing of \$10,000 from his dentist, Dr. Vahdi Sabit.³⁸ Since Ertegun had never worked for a record company, he wanted to find a partner with experience in the music business. He found that partner in the form of another dentist - Herb Abramson.³⁹ Abramson had trained as a dentist, but his real interest was in music and he had worked as a talent scout and producer for National Records.⁴⁰ After being approached by Ertegun, Abramson agreed to the partnership and invested \$2,500 in the company.⁴¹

Abramson brought with him from National the pianist, songwriter, and arranger, Jesse Stone, who sometimes wrote and recorded under the pseudonym Charles Calhoun. Abramson also brought with him his wife, Mariam, who became the bookkeeper and office manager for the company.⁴² Atlantic completed its initial team by hiring Tom Dowd, a classically-trained musician and physicist, as the company's recording engineer.⁴³ Nesuhi Ertegun later joined the company as head of Atlantic's jazz division.⁴⁴

The Atlantic label was launched in October 1947 with offices at the old Jefferson Hotel on Broadway and 56th Street.⁴⁵ The company's early



The Ertegun family, February 1942. Seated: Hayrunnisa and Munir Ertegun. Standing, left to right: Ahmet, Selma, and Nesuhi Ertegun. (Marjory Collins, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.)

releases were jazz oriented and failed to sell well. After a year, the company had failed to score any hits and was in financial trouble.⁴⁶

In early 1949, a record distributor in New Orleans contacted Atlantic and asked if they knew where he could find 5,000 copies of "Drinking Wine, Spo-Dee-O-Dee" by the country bluesman Stick McGhee on the Harlem label.⁴⁷ The record had become a local hit in New Orleans thanks to airplay by the disc jockey Poppa Stoppa.⁴⁸ Ertegun was unable to find copies of the record in New York because Harlem Records had moved to Chicago a couple of years earlier, but he offered to record an exact copy of the record to sell to the distributor.⁴⁹ Ertegun approached the blues singer and guitarist Walter Brown "Brownie" McGhee and asked if he knew anyone named Stick McGhee.⁵⁰ It turned out that Stick McGhee was Brownie's brother Granville and, fortuitously, he happened to be staying with Brownie in New York at the time.⁵¹ Ertegun and Abramson rushed Stick McGhee into the studio to record a new version of "Drinking Wine, Spo-Dee-O-Dee." Stick McGhee was accompanied at the session by his brother Brownie McGhee on guitar, Wilbert "Big Chief" Ellis on piano, Gene Ramey on bass, and an unknown drummer.⁵² Stick McGhee turned in a strong, confident vocal on the song's catchy, sing-along tune and the number was given a strong rhythmic drive by his rhythm guitar and Wilbert "Big Chief" Ellis' piano, with Brownie McGhee contributing a rocking guitar solo.

"Drinking Wine, Spo-De-O-Dee" ended up giving Atlantic its first hit, going to number two on the

national rhythm and blues charts and crossing over to number 26 on the pop charts.⁵³ The song went on to become a staple among early rockabilly artists and was covered by Malcolm Yelvington, the Johnny Burnette Trio, Sid King and the Five Strings, and Jerry Lee Lewis, among others.⁵⁴

The success of "Drinking Wine, Spo-Dee-O-Dee" was sufficient to keep Atlantic afloat for the time being. In the meantime, Ertegun and Abramson discovered the singer who would become the label's first major star - Ruth Brown.

Ruth Brown

Ruth Brown was born Ruth Weston on January 12, 1928 in Portsmouth, Virginia.⁵⁵ Her father was a dockhand but also served as choir director at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church.⁵⁶ Brown sang at the church where she received her musical training. "All of my childhood was spent

singing spirituals - not gospel so much," Brown said.⁵⁷

Brown began singing at USO clubs, where she met the trumpeter Jimmy Earle Brown. The two were married and ran away to Detroit.⁵⁸

In the summer of 1948, Brown was working as a "second chirp" singer with Lucky Millinder's band, behind the band's main singers, Anniston Allen and Bull Moose Jackson.⁵⁹ Brown travelled with the band for about a month but didn't get the chance to sing.⁶⁰ When the band got to Washington, DC, Millinder fired her.⁶¹

Brown then found work at the Crystal Caverns, a club in Northwest Washington, DC, which was run by Blanche Calloway, a sister of Cab Calloway.⁶² One night a disc jockey named Willis Conniver came to the club, heard Brown sing, and asked her if she was interested in recording. When she said that she was, Conniver called Herb Abramson and alerted him to Brown's singing talent. The next day, Abramson called Max Silverman of Waxie Maxie's to ask about Brown and Silverman told Abramson that Brown was well liked in Washington, DC. Abramson and Ertegun then travelled from New York to hear Brown sing. They were impressed by her singing and offered her a deal with Atlantic Records.⁶³

Blanche Calloway became Brown's manager and, on the strength of the proposed deal with Atlantic, booked her into the Apollo Theater in Harlem.⁶⁴ On the way to New York, however, Brown and Calloway were involved in a serious automobile accident. As a result, Brown was laid up in a hospital in Chester,

Pennsylvania for nine months. Atlantic paid the hospital bills while Brown recovered.⁶⁵

Brown still was on crutches when she finally made it to New York. Atlantic had her sit in on a recording session by Eddie Condon's jazz combo to learn what went on in a recording studio. Toward the end of the session, Ahmet Ertegun asked Brown to sing something with the band, to get an idea what her voice would sound like on record. The song chosen was an old blues ballad, "So Long." The recording turned out so well that Atlantic decided to release it as Brown's first single.⁶⁶ The record gave Brown her first hit, going to number four on the national r&b charts in the late summer of 1949.⁶⁷

The following year, Brown hit number one on the r&b charts for the first time with "Teardrops from My Eyes," a number written by Rudy Toombs.⁶⁸ The recording featured Brown's powerful vocals over a strong-driving beat and framed by a riffing horn section.

After scoring hits with "I'll Wait for You" and "I Know," Brown hit number one again in early 1952 with "5-10-15 Hours," another song written by Rudy Toombs.⁶⁹ The song was a mid-tempo rocker, with Brown's vocals backed by barrelhouse piano and saxophones. The following year, Brown returned to number one with another mid-tempo rocker, "(Mama) He Treats Your Daughter Mean," the song for which she is best known and one of the few of her records to cross over to the pop charts.⁷⁰

In 1954, Brown scored back-to-back number-one hits with "Oh What a Dream" and "Mambo Baby."⁷¹ "Oh What a Dream" was a lovely r&b ballad written by Chuck Willis that featured Brown's vocals backed by piano triplets and doo-wop style background vocals by the Drifters performing under the pseudonym of the "Rhythmakers." "Mambo Baby" was Brown's entry into the mambo craze, with the Drifters again providing background vocals as the "Rhythmakers."

Brown continued to score hits on the r&b charts for the remainder of the decade, including "I Can See Everybody's Baby," "As Long As I'm Moving," "It's Love Baby (24 Hours a Day)," "Love Has Joined Us Together" (a duet with Clyde McPhatter), "I Wanna Do More," "Sweet Baby of Mine," "Lucky Lips," "This Little

Girl's Gone Rockin'," and "I Don't Know." Brown scored her last hit on the r&b charts in early 1960 with "Don't Deceive Me."⁷² The same year, Brown parted company with Atlantic.⁷³

During the sixties and early seventies, Brown was largely absent from the music business. During that time she raised a family and held various jobs including working as a maid and driving a school bus.⁷⁴ In 1976, Brown returned to performing when she appeared in the role of Mahalia Jackson in the musical *Selma*.⁷⁵ She went on to appear regularly on stage, screen, and record, including acting in the John Waters' movie *Hairspray*; performing in the Broadway musical *Black and Blue* on Broadway; recording the album

Blues on Broadway; and hosting the NPR radio program *Blues Stage*.⁷⁶

In the '80s, Brown was instrumental in leading the fight to obtain royalty payments for r&b artists from the '40s and '50s. Although Brown's recordings were reissued on LPs and, later, CDs, she did not receive any royalties from Atlantic after leaving the company in 1960. Instead, Atlantic maintained that she owed them money for so-called "un-recouped costs" - costs for recording, production, and distribution that have to be recouped by the record company before the company pays royalties to the artist.⁷⁷

"I got about \$69 a tune for those records," Brown stated, "against what was supposed to be a 5% royalty. But I saw very little in the way of royalties, because everything was being charged off against them - musicians, studio costs, arrangements, packaging, giveaway records."⁷⁸

"I started making an effort to find out what was going on with my royalties but over a long period four different lawyers took up my case, and every one of them finally said it wasn't worth pursuing, because my account was in the red, and whatever decisions were made, Atlantic would be the beneficiary."⁷⁹

In 1983, Brown was introduced to Howell Begle.⁸⁰ In addition to being an attorney, Begle also was a rhythm and blues fan who had first seen Brown perform when he was 11 years old.⁸¹ Begle went to work for Brown, waiving his fees and representing Brown on a *pro bono* basis. Brown referred other artists to Begle who were in a situation similar to her's.⁸² Begle ended up representing a dozen other artists including the Coasters, the Drifters, and Big Joe Turner.⁸³

Begle examined Atlantic's bookkeeping practices, determined that the negative balances for Brown and other artists were incorrect, and engaged in negotiations with Atlantic on behalf of the artists.⁸⁴ In May 1988, in conjunction with its 40th-anniversary celebration, Atlantic announced that it was recalculating the royalties due to r&b artists from the '40s and '50s and making lump-sum payments to 35 acts for the years 1970 - 1988.⁸⁵ Atlantic also announced that it would provide \$1.5 million in seed money for the Rhythm and Blues Foundation, which would make grants to r&b artists who were down on their luck.⁸⁶ In 1997, under continued pressure from Begle, Atlantic further announced that it was changing its royalty rate for r&b acts from 5% to 10%, to bring its royalty rate into line with current industry practice.⁸⁷

Ruth Brown died at age 78 on November 17, 2006 in Las Vegas from a heart attack and stroke following surgery.⁸⁸



The Clovers at the Rock and Roll Revue, Apollo Theater, 1955. (Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.)

The Clovers

Another of the acts that helped to put Atlantic Records on the map was the vocal group the Clovers. The group was formed as the Four Leaf Clovers around 1947 by three students attending Armstrong High School in Washington, DC - Harold "Hal" Lucas on lead vocals, Tommy Woods on tenor vocals, and Billy Shelton on bass vocals.⁸⁹ The group underwent the first of a number of personnel changes when Matthew McQuater replaced Tommy Woods on tenor vocals and Harold Winely replaced Billy Shelton on bass vocals.⁹⁰ In early 1948, the group expanded to a quartet when John "Buddy" Bailey was added on lead vocals and Hal Lucas moved to baritone vocals.⁹¹ The group expanded again in 1949, with the addition of guitarist Bill Harris to provide instrumental accompaniment.⁹² Since the group now had five members, they dropped the "Four Leaf" from their name and became the Clovers.⁹³

The Clovers initially recorded for Rainbow Records, a small, independent label based in New York, but failed to achieve any success.⁹⁴ Then, Lou Krefetz, a record distributor in the Baltimore / Washington, DC area, saw the Clovers perform at the Rose Club in Washington, DC and became their manager.⁹⁵ Krefetz took the Clovers to Ahmet Ertegun, and the group signed to Atlantic in late 1950.⁹⁶

On February 22, 1951, the group went into Apex Studio in Manhattan to cut their first record for Atlantic, "Don't You Know I Love You." The song was written by Ahmet Ertegun under the pen name "A. Nugetre" ("Ertegun" spelled backwards).⁹⁷ Ertegun was a non-musician who composed songs in his head and then sang them to a musician to write out in musical notation.

"Don't You Know I Love You" was a mid-tempo dance number that featured a nonsense refrain of "Ooh-diddy-do-dah-do-day" and a bluesy sax solo by Frank "Floorshow" Culley.⁹⁸ In contrast to earlier Black vocal groups like the Ink Spots and the Mills Brothers, who sang in a pop-oriented, crooning style, the Clovers incorporated gospel and r&b influences into their singing style. The record became a big hit, going to number one on the national r&b charts in the summer of 1951.⁹⁹

The Clovers hit number one again late in the year with "Fool, Fool, Fool," another song written by Ertegun.¹⁰⁰ The song featured call and response vocals between the bass singer and the group over a slow dance groove with backing by Harry Van "Piano Man" Walls on piano and Willis "Gatortail" Jackson on tenor sax.

In early 1952, the Clovers went to number two on the r&b charts with "One Mint Julip," a humorous number written by Rudy Toombs.¹⁰¹ The record showcased strong group harmonies and was driven by the piano playing of Harry Van "Piano Man" Walls. That summer, the Clovers returned to number one with "Ting - A - Ling," another song written by Ertegun, which featured a prominent bass vocal and a raucous sax solo.¹⁰²

Over the next year, the Clovers continued to rack up hits with "Wonder Where My Baby's Gone," "Hey, Miss Fannie," "I Played the Fool," and "Crawlin'."¹⁰³

In 1952, Buddy Bailey was drafted into the army and was replaced on lead vocals by Charlie White, formerly of the Dominoes.¹⁰⁴ With White on lead vocals, the Clovers scored hits with "Good Lovin'" and "Lovely Dovey."¹⁰⁵

In early 1954, White left the Clovers to join the Playboys, and was replaced by Billy Mitchell. This lineup of the Clovers scored a hit with "Your Cash Ain't Nothin' but Trash," which was written by Jesse Stone under his "Charles Calhoun" pen name.¹⁰⁶

When Buddy Bailey was discharged from the army, he rejoined the Clovers, and he and Billy Mitchell alternated as lead vocalist.¹⁰⁷ The Clovers continued to score hits with "Nip Sip," "Devil or Angel," and "Hey, Doll Baby."¹⁰⁸ (A cover of "Devil or Angel" became a pop hit for Bobby Vee in 1960.) In the summer of 1956, the Clovers scored their final hit on Atlantic with "Love, Love, Love," their first record to cross over the pop charts.¹⁰⁹

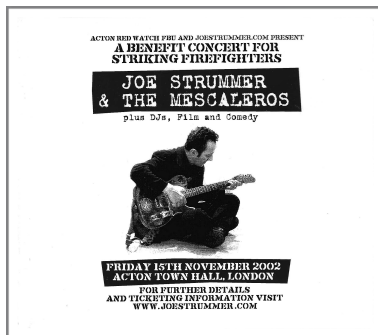
After leaving Atlantic Records, the Clovers signed to United Artists. The group scored one final r&b hit in 1959 with "Love Potion No. 9," a humorous number written by Leiber and Stoller, very much in the style of songs that they were writing at the time for the Coasters.¹¹⁰ The record also crossed over to number 23 on the pop charts.¹¹¹ (A cover of "Love Potion No. 9" became a pop hit for the Searchers in 1965.)

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REVIEWS



Live at Acton Town Hall: Joe Strummer & the Mescaleros (Dark Horse)

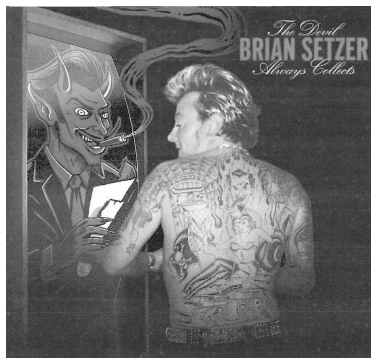
By Geoff Cabin

This album documents a live performance by Joe Strummer and the Mescaleros at the Acton Town Hall in London on November 15, 2002 to benefit striking firefighters.

Strummer and the Mescaleros turn in a fantastic performance and the album captures all of the energy and excitement of a great live show. The setlist is a mixture of material that Strummer did with the Mescaleros and older Clash numbers. Strummer is in top form throughout the show, consistently belting out strong and impassioned vocals. The Mescaleros provide sharp and versatile accompaniment, skillfully handling the world-beat sounds of "Shaktar Donetsk" and "Bhindee Bhagee," the reggae rhythms of "(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais" and "Police and Thieves," the propulsive dance grooves of "Get Down Moses" and "Cool 'n' Out," and the roaring rock 'n' roll of "Coma Girl" and "I Fought the Law."

Mick Jones was in the audience at the concert and joins Strummer and the Mescaleros onstage for the encore numbers. This was the first time that Strummer and Jones had performed together onstage since Jones' last concert with the Clash in 1984. They kick off with the languid groove of the reggae dub number "Bankrobber" and then tear through fiery versions of two early Clash classics, "White Riot" and "London's Burning."

Sadly, this would be one of Strummer's last concerts. He died a little over a month later, on December 22, 2002. Fortunately the show was recorded for posterity and is a valuable addition to Strummer's musical legacy.



The Devil Always Collects: Brian Setzer (Surf Dog)

By Beverly Paterson

For forty-odd years, Brian Setzer has obtained both commercial and artistic acclaim. During that time, many musical trends have come and gone. Yet none of these ever-shifting styles have affected the universally-

revered singer, songwriter and guitarist.

As founder and leader of the Stray Cats, Setzer introduced rockabilly to a whole new generation of audiophiles. Performing the music with sincerity and competency, the Stray Cats pretty much singlehandedly sparked revived interest and mainstream acceptance of a genre that had basically been laying dormant for nearly three decades.

After the Stray Cats broke up in 1984, Setzer launched a dual career as a solo act and sideman. The early nineties saw Setzer fronting the duly dubbed Brian Setzer Orchestra, which specialized in the jazzy sounds of swing.

There's retro music and contemporary retro music - if that makes any sense. Setzer definitely fits into the latter category, as his tunesmith abilities and guitar playing are so ripe, spirited and exciting that they transcend his influences. By embracing the cues of folks like Carl Perkins, Gene Vincent, Chuck Berry, Elvis and Eddie Cochran - incorporated with forays into surf rock and forties-fashioned swing and big band music - Setzer ably conceived his own identifiable presentation.

Setzer's most recent album - *The Devil Always Collects* - portrays his passion for traditional rootin' tootin' rock and roll far and wide. In fact, it's no exaggeration to say this is perhaps his strongest recording to date.

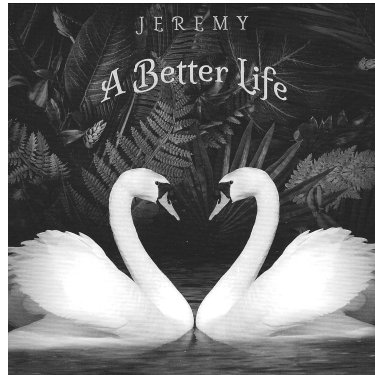
Charging full steam ahead to a romping and rumbling rockabilly beat, "Rock Boys Rock," is backed by a bout of sassy female vocals taunting, "Rock boys

rock, put it in the box and show me what you got," while a cover of Del Reeves' "Girl On The Billboard" snaps, crackles and pops with clusters of clattering Chuck Berry-flavored licks.

Carved of a tight and sharp arrangement, the hard-edged "Black Leather Jacket" buzzes with biting guitar tones, strapping drums and snarling vocals, where "What'll It Be Baby Doll?" marries cool swing moves to bubbling rockabilly rhythms, resulting in a contagiously punchy pulsation.

A rattling punkabilly tenor guides quick-paced cuts such as "Psycho Suzie" and the goofy, tongue-twisting "A Dude'll Do (What A Dude'll Do)," and then there's the finger-clicking jazzabilly slow-burning groove of "One Particular Chick." A rendition of Nick Lowe's brisk and bright "Play That Fast Thing One More Time" further appears on the album.

Stabbing melodies, harmonious hooks and smoking hot instrumentation brimming with economical power are the elements driving each track on *The Devil Always Collects*. From the moment he entered the public eye, Setzer was lauded for his vision and talent, and remains consistently appreciated by a three-pronged audience of fans, musicians and journalists. Not only will *The Devil Always Collects* please those already hip to Setzer's music, but new listeners will also be blown away by these great songs and will be eager to sink their ears into the riffmaster's previous efforts.



A Better Life: Jeremy
(JAM)

By Geoff Cabin

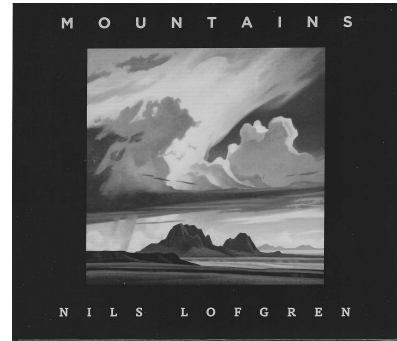
This is another in the ongoing series of albums on which Jeremy Morris collaborates with producer Ken Stringfellow, and it's yet another outstanding effort.

Jeremy writes songs that draw on the classic pop-rock sounds of the '60s and '70s and adds his own dynamic guitar pyrotechnics. As producer and multi-instrumentalist, Stringfellow provides strong musical settings for the songs, employing a wide variety of sounds and textures.

Jeremy bursts out of the gate with the album's title track, which provides a good example his sound - a catchy melody over layers of jangling and ringing guitars topped off with an electrifying guitar solo. The material is uniformly strong throughout the album, but highlights include "Here We Go Now," which boasts a fiery, explosive guitar solo; "There Is A Way," with its soaring anthemic melody; "Turn to Love," which features a catchy refrain with echoing background vocals; and "If We Try," which builds to a climactic guitar freakout.

Anyone who enjoys the sounds of classic guitar pop will find lots to like on this album.

(jamrecordings.com)



Mountains: Nils Lofgren
(Cattle Track Road)

By Geoff Cabin

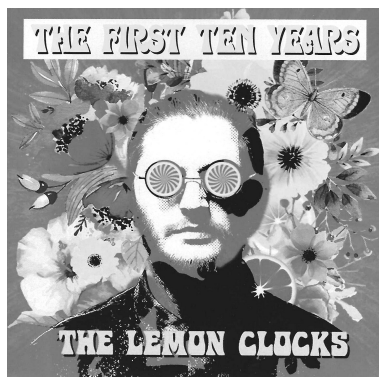
Back in the '70s, Nils Lofgren appeared to be on the verge of breaking through to stardom. He had a lot going for him - he was a skilled songsmith who wrote irresistibly-catchy and rocking tunes, a brilliant guitarist with a distinctive and instantly-recognizable sound, and a dynamic performer with an acrobatic stage presence that included performing a backflip while playing the guitar. Stardom remained elusive, however, and these days Lofgren is best known as a sideman for Bruce Springsteen and Neil Young. In addition to working as a sideman, though, Lofgren has continued to pursue his solo career and to produce lots of great music. His latest album, *Mountains*, is one of his best.

Lofgren is backed on the album by longtime collaborators Kevin McCormick on bass and Andy Newmark and Timm Biery on drums. Backing vocalist Cindy Mizelle plays a large role on the album, as she did on Lofgren's previous two albums. The album also features guest appearances by David Crosby, Ringo Starr, and Neil Young.

Mountains kicks off with the anthemic rocker, "Ain't the Truth Enough" which is driven by a propulsive guitar riff and features sharp slide guitar playing. Lofgren turns in an inspired gospel-style

version of Bruce Springsteen's "Back in Your Arms," accompanied by the Howard Gospel Choir. "Won't Cry No More" is a bluesy rocker with soulful backing vocals by Cindy Mizelle. On the country-tinged ballad, "Nothin's Easy," Lofgren sets a plaintive melody over layers of acoustic, electric, and pedal steel guitar. "Dream Killer" is a sharp-edged rocker that provides a showcase for Lofgren's guitar pyrotechnics. "Only Your Smile" is a quiet, reflective ballad, driven by loping bass lines by the jazz bassist Ron Carter, spare piano, and brushed drums. On "I Remember Her Name," Lofgren sets an ultra-catchy melody to a crisp, percolating rhythm.

Mountains demonstrates that Lofgren remains at the top of his game and is still making fantastic music.



The First Ten Years: The Lemon Clocks
(Fruits de Mer)

By Geoff Cabin

The Lemon Clocks are a psychedelic pop band that combine catchy pop melodies with psychedelic soundscapes. The band draws on the sounds of psychedelic bands of the '60s as well as the paisley underground bands of the '80s. *The First Ten Years* is a compilation album that collects 20 tracks from the Lemon Clock's six albums released from 2012 to 2022, and also includes

two new and previously-unreleased tracks.

One of the highlights of the album is "Rainbow Bridge," with echo-laden vocals backed by spacey, swirling keyboards and fuzzed-out guitars. "The Beginning of the End" is a breezy folk-rock tune with Byrds-style guitars, while "Everybody Wants Some More" is a heavy-duty rocker built around a "Gloria"-like guitar riff. Both "Forklift Driver" and "Elevator" are catchy rockers with a dynamic guitar guitar solos. "White Horse" is a spacey ballad with distorted-sounding vocals. "Fractal Dreams" opens quietly, with guitar, piano, and spacey synthesizer sounds and then builds to a conclusion with a ferocious, noisy guitar assault.

The First Ten Years is an excellent album that provides a perfect introduction to the music of the Lemon Clocks.

(jamrecordings.com)



Last Chance to Learn the Twist: Graham Parker & the Goldtops
(Big Stir)

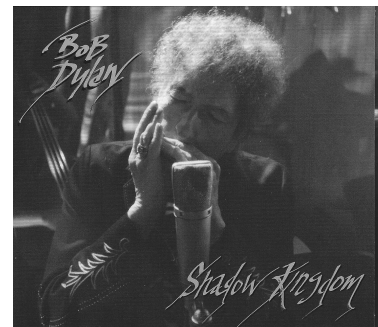
By Geoff Cabin

Last Chance to Learn the Twist is the latest album by Graham Parker and it's a total knockout. On the album, Parker's vocals are as strong and soulful as ever, and he's come up with a particularly strong set of songs this time out. As on his previous studio album, Parker is ably backed by the Goldtops, who consist of Simon Edwards on bass,

Martin Belmont on guitar, Geraint Watkins on keyboards, and new member Jim Russell on drums. The band is augmented on various tracks by a horn section, the Easy Access Orchestra, and backup singers, the Lady Bugs.

The album kicks off with "Music of the Devil," a pean to the power of rock 'n' roll, which features a tom tom-driven groove and a catchy refrain sung by the Lady Bugs. "Grand Scheme of Things" is a waltz-time ballad with Parker's vocals backed by soulful organ and guitar that recall the heyday of Stax Records. The horn section is featured prominently on "Wicked Wit," which captures classic Carolina beach music sound. "Last Stretch of the Road" is a reflective, folk-oriented number with a relaxed groove that features harmonica, strummed acoustic guitar, and ringing electric guitar. On the acerbic lament "We Did Nothing," Parker bemoans apathy, both personal and political. The album closes with "Since You Left Me Baby," a rocking r&b number that features honky-tonk piano and the horn section.

Last Chance to Do the Twist a really great album that ranks with Parker's best work.



Shadow Kingdom: Bob Dylan
(Columbia)

By Al Masciocchi

First, let's talk about the "concert film" which is how *Shadow Kingdom* debuted. It is hard to believe that was on July 18, 2021, 2 ½ years ago. Partly

that is due to the external circumstances at the time; vaccines had arrived but very little semblance of the pre-covid world had resumed. It all seems so long ago.

It sure seemed like the broadcast was to be a live stream. The pre-broadcast press for it made it seem like a small setting live concert stream. And that seemed plausible since Dylan, who has seemed to live on-stage since 1988 when he started his Never-Ending Tour, had been sidelined since December 2019. Why not have a one-off? It turned out that it wasn't anything of the sort and once that was known, it is possible to interpret that press as walking a fine line and leading you to believe it was a live stream, without coming right out and saying it.

After the fact, we learned that very little of what we saw was "real". It was an amalgam of several staged performances at what was said to be The Bon-Bon Club in Marseille; no such club exists. The staging was clear with a film noir vibe and the audience in dated fashions and hairstyles. There are changes to the set, Dylan changes costumes, there is clearly lip-syncing, the audio is from studio recordings.

And why should we be surprised? Martin Scorsese's *Rolling Thunder Revue: A Bob Dylan Story* from 2019 was part-documentary/part-story although nobody early on went into it thinking it had fictional elements all over the place.

For both films – *Rolling Thunder Revue* and *Shadow Kingdom* – you can be enraged at being duped or you can recognize that this is what Dylan has been doing since shortly after Robert Zimmerman changed his name, arrived in Greenwich Village, and started telling people about running away from home as a child, attending a reform school, and joining a circus. As Dylan sang in his first Sinatra album,

Shadows In The Night, "Why Try To Change Me Now?"

As with almost anything Dylan does there are mysteries. The CD and LP give no information except for the track listing and the songwriting credit to Bob Dylan for all songs. No indication of recording dates, producer, or musicians. The musicians credited on the stream do not include any of Dylan's regular band members, not even the ubiquitous Tony Garnier. Are any of those musicians even on the released recording? The subtitle of the original broadcast was *The Early Songs Of Bob Dylan* (although this doesn't appear on the CD or LP sleeves) and even that has some fiction in it. "What Was It You Wanted" is from 1989's *Oh Mercy*, 30+ years old but no-one's idea of an early Dylan song. And then it wraps up with a new instrumental entitled "Sierra's Theme".

But again, this has been Bob Dylan for his entire career. None of us should be surprised by any of this or, really, anything he does at this point. What matters, as always, is the music.

Dylan's entire career has been about transmuting the fundamentals of 20th century American music – country & western, folk, rhythm & blues, blues, gospel, even the Great American Popular Songbook – taking strands from some or all of them and twisting them into something that seems totally new at the same time as they seem timeless, as if they have always been here.

"When I Paint My Masterpiece", one of several songs from the early 1970s, starts the "show" off with a jaunty carnival atmosphere and Dylan re-writing lyrics. This, too, Dylan has been doing all through his career, changing words, changing melodies, changing arrangements. His transmuting occurs with his own songs.

And so it proceeds for the program. There are six songs from Dylan's mid-'60s hat trick of *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited*, and *Blonde On Blonde*. None of them, though, evince the thin, wild mercury sound of the originals. Two of his C&W crooner numbers ("I'll Be Your Baby Tonight" and "To Be Alone With You") retain their C&W feel even though they are very different from the originals.

One of the frequent criticisms of Dylan, particularly during the latter half of his Never-Ending Tour has been his regular distortion of songs almost to the point of being unrecognizable. None of that is happening here. All the songs are totally recognizable despite some very different arrangements and Dylan's voice is up-front in the mix and clear as a bell. His phrasing powers are intact.

In many ways, you can consider this the quintessential Dylan album. Startlingly new yet of a piece with his whole back catalogue not to mention all of American music. Breaking new ground. At the top of his powers as a singer.

Right now, this is arguably the last new album Bob Dylan has released (*The Complete Budokan 1978* being the only possible exception). 62 years into his career and at the age of 82, If there is never another one, he finished at the top of his game. But if we are lucky there will be a *Shadow Kingdom 2: The Later Songs Of Bob Dylan*.