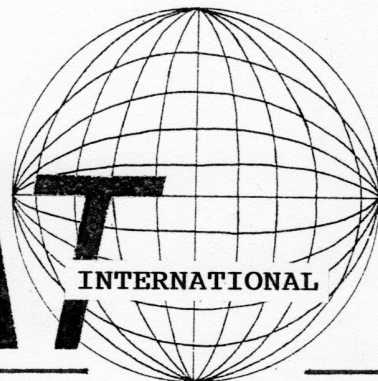


# ROCK BEAT



Issue No. 51 - Summer 2025

FREE



**Hardrock Gunter**

**Red Foley**

**Merrill E. Moore**

**The Orioles**

**The Ravens**

POP ROCK PUNK ROCK GARAGE ROCK ROOTS ROCK SURF ROCK

# NEWS BEAT

## Saint Etienne

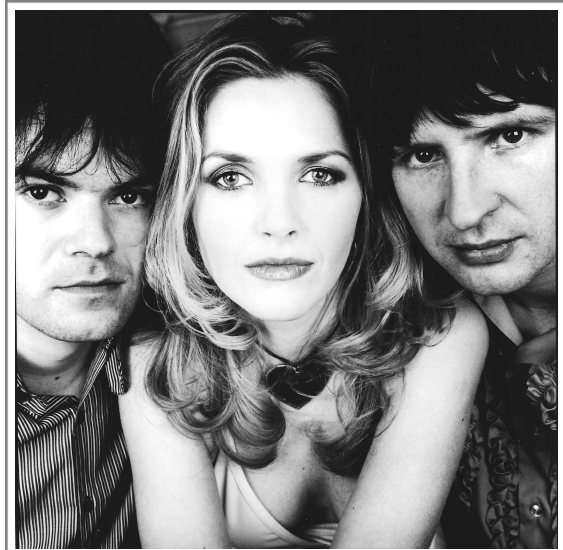
**Saint Etienne's** new album, *International*, will be released on September 5. A track from the album, "Glad," has been released as a single. The group will tour in support of the album in 2026.

A press release from Saint Etienne indicated that this will be their last album. "The group aren't splitting up as such - they remain the best of friends after 35 years recording together," the release stated. "But they don't feel like they want to go on forever and wanted to go out with a bang."

## The Histrioniks

The new album by the **Histrioniks**, *Shangri-La and Penitence*, has been released on CatErratic Records.

(levy201@comcast.net)



Saint Etienne. Left to right: Pete Wiggs, Sarah Cracknell, and Bob Stanley. (John Stoddart, courtesy of Warner Bros.)

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# Surf Beat

By Terry Wilson

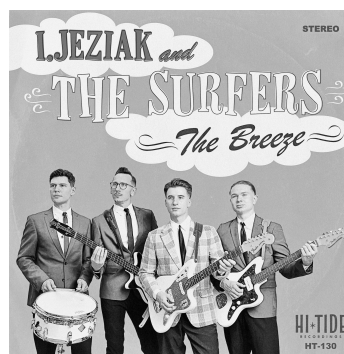


*Summer by the Beach* is the third release by the southern-California-based Little Kahuna. The band has plays surf-guitar instrumentals while incorporating elements of bossa nova and exotica into their sound.

*Summer by the Beach* concentrates on surf-oriented material and features a traditional surf-guitar sound. The title track is a light and breezy number with lyrical guitar lines over a languid rhythm to crate a sound reminiscent of the Sandals. "3 Day Weekend" mines similar territory with a catchy melody over a relaxed groove. "King Totem" is an atmospheric number with the guitar augmented by melodica, breathy saxophone, and wordless background vocals over a percolating rhythm. The Dick Dale-style rocker, "Flying Coffin," has a Middle-Eastern-flavored melody and features rapid-fire double picking and a fuzz-guitar interlude. "First Champion" features twangy guitar and growling sax over a slow-burning groove.

*Summer by the Beach* is a highly enjoyable album and provides an excellent soundtrack for summer.

([littlekahunamusic.com](http://littlekahunamusic.com) / [littlekahunamusic.bandcamp.com](http://littlekahunamusic.bandcamp.com))



"The Breeze" / "Free as the Ocean" is the latest release by I. Jeziak and the Surfers, a surf-guitar band from Gdansk, Poland. The group plays in a traditional, '60s-era style and, as this single demonstrates, they

have really mastered the sound and style. On "The Breeze," the group sets tremolo guitar picking and growling saxophone to a driving, upbeat rhythm. "Free as the Ocean" features twangy, Duane Eddy-style guitar over spacey, echo-laden piano, creating a sound reminiscent of "Pipeline." This is an excellent release by one of the best new bands on the surf music scene.

([thesurferspoland.bandcamp.com](http://thesurferspoland.bandcamp.com))



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# The History of Rock 'n' Roll: Part 13

By Geoff Cabin

## Hardrock Gunter

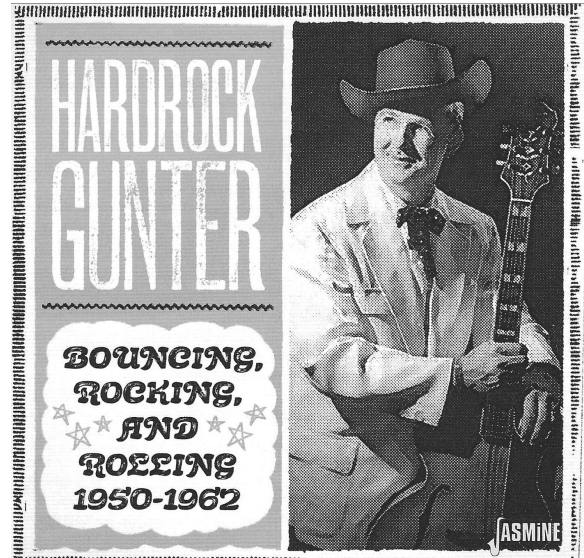
Hardrock Gunter was another important pioneer of country boogie. Sidney Louis Gunter, Jr. was born on February 27, 1925 outside of Birmingham, Alabama.<sup>1</sup> Gunter learned to play guitar as a boy and was heavily influenced by the western swing musician, Hank Penny.<sup>2</sup> While in his early teens, Gunter formed his first band, the Hoot Owl Ramblers, whose name came from Hoot Owl Holler, the area of Birmingham where the band members lived.<sup>3</sup> Gunter fronted the band under the name "Goofy Sid."<sup>4</sup>

Gunter subsequently joined the Golden River Boys, a country band led by Happy Wilson.<sup>5</sup> It was while playing with the Golden River Boys, that Gunter earned his nickname "Hardrock." While loading instruments into the trunk of a car, the trunk lid fell on Gunter's head and he acted as if he didn't feel anything, leading his bandmates to say that he had a head as hard as a rock.<sup>6</sup> Gunter remained with the band until it dissolved in 1941, when Happy Wilson and other members of the band were drafted.<sup>7</sup> Gunter then pursued a solo career and also worked with the Delmore Brothers and Fiddlin' Arthur Smith when they appeared on *The Alabama Hayloft Jamboree*, which was broadcast by WAPI from Birmingham.<sup>8</sup> In 1943, Gunter, too, joined the army.<sup>9</sup>

After World War II ended, Gunter returned to Birmingham and he and Happy Wilson reformed the Golden River Boys.<sup>10</sup> In 1948, Gunter left the band, although he continued to work as their manager and booking agent.<sup>11</sup> He also pursued a solo career and branched out into radio and t.v.<sup>12</sup> Gunter created a children's puppet show, which was broadcast by WABT-TV, a local station, hosted an early-morning radio show, and, along with Happy Wilson, had a daily 30-minutes t.v. show called *The Happiness Boys*.<sup>13</sup>

In early 1950, Gunter recorded the song "Birmingham Bounce" for the Bama label.<sup>14</sup> Gunter was backed on the record by members of the Golden River Boys who were billed as the Pebbles.<sup>15</sup> On the record, Gunter sang about a dance beat called the "Birmingham bounce" accompanied by a boogie-woogie beat, with each member of the band taking a solo.

"Birmingham Bounce" received airplay on radio stations in the south and began to take off.<sup>16</sup> As a result, Paul Cohen of Decca Records approached Manny Pearson, the owner of the Bama label, and



offered to buy the master recording of "Birmingham Bounce" to release on Decca.<sup>17</sup> Pearson, however, was unwilling to sell.<sup>18</sup> Instead, Cohen had Decca's biggest country star, Red Foley, record a cover version of "Birmingham Bounce."<sup>19</sup> Foley's cover of "Birmingham Bounce" shot straight to number one on the country charts in May, 1950 and crossed over to number 14 on the pop charts.<sup>20</sup> With the success of Red Foley's version of the song, Gunter was shut out of the charts.

In July, 1950, Gunter's second record, "Gonna Dance All Night," was released by the Bama label.<sup>21</sup> The song was another county-boogie number and included the lyrics "We're gonna rock 'n' roll while we dance all night." Unfortunately, the record failed to go anywhere. Following Gunter's third release "Lonesome Blues," the Bama label went out of business.<sup>22</sup>

In early 1951, Paul Cohen signed Gunter to the Decca label and released the song "Honky Tonk Blues," a Hank Williams-style honky-tonk number.<sup>23</sup> This seemed like a big break for Gunter, but his career again was interrupted by military service. Following World War II, Gunter had remained in the army reserves and now he was recalled to active duty due to the Korean War.<sup>24</sup> Gunter was able to record some songs while on leave, including the country boogie numbers "Dixieland Boogie" and "Boogie-Woogie on a Saturday Night" as well as a cover of the Domino's

"Sixty Minute Man," sung as a duet with Roberta Lee, but none of the records became hits.<sup>25</sup>

In 1953, Gunter was discharged from the army and briefly recorded for MGM. After working as a disc jockey at WWVA in Wheeling, West Virginia, Gunter returned to Birmingham and began working as a disc jockey at WJLD.<sup>26</sup> The station manager at WJLD was Jim Connally, the brother-in-law of Sam Phillips of Sun Records, and Connally helped arrange for Gunter to record for Sun.<sup>27</sup> Phillips wanted Gunter to come to Memphis to record, but Gunter was too busy.<sup>28</sup> Instead, Gunter recorded a new version of "Gonna Dance All Night" and another song in Birmingham and sent them to Phillips.<sup>29</sup> The new version of "Gonna Dance All Night" was performed at a faster tempo, featured a saxophone solo, and was very close to rockabilly. Sun released the new version of "Gonna Dance All Night" in May 1954, just two months before Sun released Elvis' first record.<sup>30</sup> Once again, however, the song failed to sell.<sup>31</sup>

Later in 1954, Gunter returned to WWVA in Wheeling, West Virginia.<sup>32</sup> Around the same time, he signed with King Records, but failed to score any hits.<sup>33</sup>

After his deal with King Records ended, Gunter recorded "Jukebox Help Me Find My Baby" for the Wheeling-based Cross Country label, with the recording credited to the Rhythm Rockers.<sup>34</sup> This record was straight-ahead rockabilly, with Gunter singing in a hiccuping, Elvis style. Bill Randle, a popular disc jockey on WERE in Cleveland, played the record on his show and it started to break out in the Cleveland area.<sup>35</sup> As a result, the record came to the attention of Sam Phillips, who leased the recording for release on the Sun label.<sup>36</sup> Phillips thought that the song was too long and edited about 30 seconds out of it, but the truncated version failed to sell.<sup>37</sup>

During the late '50s and early '60s, Gunter recorded for his own Emperor and Gee Gee labels as well as for a number of other small, independent labels such as Island, King, Secco, and Starday, but failed to score any hits.<sup>38</sup> Among the standout recordings during this period are the rockabilly numbers "Whoo I Mean Whee" and "Rock-A-Bop Baby"; an attempt to join in on the twist fad, "Hillbilly Twist"; and the instrumental, "Rebel Guitar Picker," which showcased Gunter's impressive guitar picking skill. In the mid-'60s, Gunter left music to concentrate on running an insurance agency.<sup>39</sup>

After a hiatus of about 30 years, Gunter returned to performing when he headlined, along with Wanda Jackson, the International Rockabilly & Rock 'n' Roll Meeting '95 in Munich in 1995.<sup>40</sup> Gunter went on to play at other festivals in Europe, the UK, and the US.<sup>41</sup> Gunter died on March 15, 2013 in Rio Rancho, New Mexico at the age of 88 from complications of pneumonia.<sup>42</sup>

## Red Foley

Red Foley was one of the most popular country music stars of the post-World-War-II period. While Foley performed in a variety of styles, during the late '40s and early '50s, he scored big hits with several country-boogie numbers, which helped to popularize the style.

Clyde Julian Foley was born in Blue Lick, Kentucky on June 17, 1910 and grew up around Berea, Kentucky, where his father ran a general store.<sup>43</sup> Foley learned to play guitar and harmonica from his father and other local musicians.<sup>44</sup>

During the 1930s, Foley became a member of John Lair's Cumberland Ridge Runners, who performed on the *National Barn Dance*, which was broadcast by radio station WLS in Chicago.<sup>45</sup> Foley first recorded during the 1930s as a member of the Cumberland Ridge Runners for the American Record Corporation.<sup>46</sup> Foley went on to appear on the *Renfro Valley Show* from 1937 - 39.<sup>47</sup>

In 1941, Foley signed with the Decca label and scored a hit with the maudlin tearjerker, "Old Shep," which he wrote about his German Shepherd, Hoover.<sup>48</sup> ("Old Shep" was a favorite of Elvis Presley's. Elvis performed it at talent shows while in school and, in 1956, recorded it for his second album.) In 1944, Foley hit number one on the country charts with "Smoke on the Water," which crossed over to number seven on the pop charts.<sup>49</sup> The song was a somewhat jingoistic, World-War-II number, which urged the crushing of the Axis forces and the overthrow of fascism. In 1945, Foley again hit number one on the country charts with "Shame on You," on which he was backed by Lawrence Welk and his Orchestra.<sup>50</sup> Although a big country hit, the song sounded more pop than country, with its gently-bouncing rhythm and sweet-sounding accompaniment.

In 1946, Foley moved to Nashville and joined the *Grand Ole Opry*.<sup>51</sup> In the following years, he helped to establish Nashville as the leading recording center for country music.<sup>52</sup>

In the summer of 1947, Foley hit number one on the country charts for the third time, with a cover of Moon Mullican's "New Jolie Blonde," a Cajun-style waltz number that featured accordion, fiddle, and steel guitar.<sup>53</sup> Foley then ventured into country-boogie territory, scoring a hit with a cover of the Delmore Brothers' "Freight Train Boogie," which featured wailing and honking harmonica by Salty Holmes and boogie-woogie guitar by Zeb Turner and Zeke Turner.<sup>54</sup> In the fall of 1948, Foley again went to number one on the country charts with the country-boogie number "Tennessee Saturday Night," which featured twangy guitar and sawing fiddle.<sup>55</sup> Foley then scored another country-boogie hit in late 1949 with "Sunday Down in Tennessee," which featured boogie-woogie piano by Owen Bradley.<sup>56</sup>





Red Foley. (Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.)

In early 1950, Foley scored the biggest hit of his career with "Chattanooga Shoe Shine Boy," which went to number one on both the country and pop charts.<sup>57</sup> The song was a catchy, country-boogie number with clicking spoons driving the rhythm. The flip side of "Chattanooga Shoe Shine Boy," "Sugarfoot Rag," also became a hit.<sup>58</sup> "Sugarfoot Rag" originally had been done as an instrumental by Nashville session guitarist Hank Garland. Foley's version had lyrics added by Vaughn Monroe and featured foot-stomping fiddle solos by Tommy Jackson and lightning-fast guitar solos by Hank Garland. (Garland went on to play with Elvis Presley, after the departure of Elvis' original guitarist, Scotty Moore.)

In the spring of 1950, Foley again hit number one on the country charts with a cover of Hardrock Gunter's "Birmingham Bounce," driven by boogie-woogie piano and honking harmonica.<sup>59</sup> Later in the year, Foley returned to number one with a cover of Huddie "Leadbelly" Ledbetter's "Goodnight Irene," sung

as a duet with Ernest Tubb.<sup>60</sup> In the early '50s, Foley continued to score hits with country-boogie numbers, including "Hobo Boogie," "Milk Bucket Boogie," and a cover of Arkie Shibley's "Hot Rod Race."<sup>61</sup>

In 1953, Foley became Pat Boone's father-in-law, when Boone married Foley's daughter Shirley.<sup>62</sup>

In 1954, Foley relocated to Missouri to host the *Ozark Jubilee* on KWTO, part of the ABC radio network.<sup>63</sup> From 1955 to '60, Foley hosted the ABC - t.v. show *Jubilee USA*.<sup>64</sup>

Foley scored his last hit on the country charts as a solo artist with "Travelin' Man" in the summer of 1959, but he continued to score hits with duets sung with Kitty Wells throughout the '60s, including the number one hit, "One by One."<sup>65</sup>

During 1962 - '63, Foley co-starred with Fess Parker in the ABC television show *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*.<sup>66</sup>

Foley then returned to Nashville and continued performing until he died from a heart attack at age 58 on September 19, 1968 in Fort Wayne, Indiana.<sup>67</sup>

Merrill E. Moore

Merrill E. Moore was another important proponent of country boogie. During the early-to-mid '50s, he made a series of records very close in style to what would become known as rockabilly.

Merrill Everett Moore was born on September 26, 1923 in Algona, Iowa, located in a rural area of the state, near the Des Moines River.<sup>68</sup> As a youngster, Moore

took piano lessons.<sup>69</sup> While in high school, he discovered boogie-woogie by listening to records by the pianists Albert Ammons, Pete Johnson, Meade Lux Lewis, and the big bands of Will Bradley, featuring Freddie Slack on piano, and Bob Crosby, featuring Bob Zurke on piano.<sup>70</sup> "Those were the cats that laid it down for me," Moore said. "That's what I wanted to play like."<sup>71</sup>

After serving in the navy during World War II, Moore moved to Tucson, where he played at the Santa Rita Hotel.<sup>72</sup> By 1948, Moore had relocated to San Diego.<sup>73</sup> In 1950, he and his band, the Saddle Rockin' Rhythm Boys, were hired to work six nights a week at the Buckaroo Club, where they played a combination of boogie-woogie and western swing.<sup>74</sup> Moore was a dazzling boogie-woogie pianist, playing thundering bass lines with his left hand and lightning-fast runs overtop with his right hand. Moore came to the



attention of Capitol Records A&R man, Ken Nelson, and, in early 1952, Nelson signed Moore to Capitol.<sup>75</sup>

Moore's first single, "Corrina, Corrina," was released in late 1952.<sup>76</sup> The song was performed in a western-swing style with solos by piano, guitar, and fiddle. Moore's next single, "Bartender's Blues," was a piano-pounding boogie-woogie number with pedal steel guitar adding a country flavor. In 1953, Moore released a cover of Don Raye and Freddie Slack's "House of Blue Lights," played at a fast tempo and driven by a combination of piano and pedal steel guitar. This essentially was rockabilly although there was not yet a name for it.

Over the next several years, Moore released a number of singles in a similar vein, including "Cow Cow Boogie," "Rock-Rockola," "Yes, Indeed," and "Down the Road a Piece." Moore also did session work for Capitol and played piano in the Cliffie Stone Band during Stone's *Hometown Jamboree* radio and t.v. broadcasts on Saturday nights.<sup>77</sup> None of Moore's singles made the national charts and, in 1958, he was dropped by Capitol.<sup>78</sup>

In the late '60s, during the first rock 'n' roll revival in the UK, Ember Records released two albums of Moore's Capitol singles under the titles *Bellyfull of Blue Thunder* and *Rough House* 88.<sup>79</sup> The albums were well received and Moore was brought over to tour the UK and Europe, where he was hailed as a rockabilly pioneer.<sup>80</sup> Moore was surprised and somewhat puzzled by the enthusiastic attention he received from rock 'n' roll fans. He didn't consider his music rock 'n' roll and he claimed to have never heard the term "rockabilly."<sup>81</sup> "I was dumbfounded; I never knew there was that kind of following for my music," Moore said.<sup>82</sup>

Moore continued to perform locally at clubs in the San Diego area up until his death from cancer on June 14, 2000.<sup>83</sup>

## Doo-Wop

During the late '40s and early '50s, a new style of vocal-group music, which has come to be known as "doo-wop," was pioneered by Black vocal groups. There had been popular Black vocal groups before the advent of doo-wop - most notably the Ink Spots and the Mills Brothers - but they had sung in a crooning, pop-oriented style.<sup>84</sup> Doo-wop groups incorporated gospel and rhythm-and-blues singing styles into their sound. Doo-wop was characterized by high tenor or falsetto lead vocals, prominent bass vocals, and background vocalists singing nonsense phrases in imitation of instruments.<sup>85</sup>

## The Orioles

One of the pioneering rhythm-and-blues vocal groups was the Orioles. Their 1948 smash hit, "It's Too Soon to Know," is considered the first rhythm-and-blues vocal-group record and helped to provide the prototype for vocal group records that followed it.

"It's Too Soon to Know" was written by the Orioles' manager, Deborah Chessler. Faith Shirley "Deborah" Chessler was a young, aspiring songwriter who worked in the Kitty Kelly shoe store in downtown Baltimore.<sup>86</sup> She was a non-musician who composed songs in her head and then sang them to someone to write out in musical notation.<sup>87</sup> Chessler frequented the Hippodrome and Royal Theaters in Baltimore and would go backstage and try to pitch her songs to performers.<sup>88</sup> Chessler achieved her first success in March 1948, when her song "Tell Me So" was recorded by the jazz and blues singer Savannah Churchill, best known for her work with bandleader Benny Carter and her number one r&b hit "I Want to Be Loved (But Only by You)."<sup>89</sup> Shortly afterwards, the song also was recorded by Dinah Washington, who was then on the verge of a long string of hits on the r&b charts.<sup>90</sup>

When disc jockeys in Baltimore played "Tell Me So," they often would mention Chessler's name. "The disc jockeys were laying on it, and every time they played it, they would say 'Hometown girl, Deborah Chessler,' she recalled.<sup>91</sup> As a result, Chessler's name became known around the Baltimore area.<sup>92</sup>

One evening when Chessler was at home with her mother, she received a phone call from Abe Schaeffer.<sup>93</sup> Schaeffer was working with a vocal group called the Vibra-Naires.<sup>94</sup> He had recorded some demos of the group, but didn't know what to do with them.<sup>95</sup> Schaeffer had heard Chessler's name on the radio and wondered whether she would be willing to get involved and help out with the group.<sup>96</sup>

The Vibra-Naires sang three songs over the phone to Chessler.<sup>97</sup> Chessler was impressed by the lead vocals of Sonny Til and the group's harmonies and decided, on the spot, that she would work with them.<sup>98</sup>

"They were different," she said. "They weren't like the Mills Brothers and they weren't like the Ink Spots. They were their own style. That was what sold me."<sup>99</sup>

The lead singer of the Vibra-Naires, Sonny Til (Earlington Carl Tilghman) was born in Baltimore in 1925.<sup>100</sup> After serving in the army during World War II, Til returned to Baltimore and began singing in amateur shows at the Avenue Cafe.<sup>101</sup>

In the spring of 1948, Til formed the Vibra-Naires, mostly with singers and musicians who performed at the Avenue Cafe.<sup>102</sup> In addition to Til on lead vocals, the group included Alexander Sharp on high tenor vocals, George Nelson on baritone vocals, Johnny Reed on bass vocals and stand-up bass, and Tommy Gaither on guitar.<sup>103</sup>

After hearing the Vibra-Naires sing, Chessler took over as their manager.<sup>104</sup> Using the demos that Abe Schaeffer had recorded as a calling card, she got the Vibra-Naires work in local clubs.<sup>105</sup> She also got the group a spot on *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts*, a weekly radio show broadcast from New York.<sup>106</sup> The Vibra-Naires lost out to the jazz pianist George Shearing, but the show received several hundred calls and letters from listeners who complained that the Orioles should have won.<sup>107</sup> As a result, Godfrey invited the group back to perform on the daily *Chesterfield Show*.<sup>108</sup>

Shortly afterwards, Chessler returned to New York and took the demos recorded by Abe Schaeffer to Jerry Blaine of Jubilee Records.<sup>109</sup> Blaine liked what he heard and signed the group to his newly-created record label, *It's a Natural*.<sup>110</sup> No one was happy with the name the Vibra-Naires, and so Blaine renamed the group the Orioles after the Maryland state bird.<sup>111</sup> (Along with the Ravens, the Orioles helped to start the trend of vocal groups naming themselves after birds.<sup>112</sup> They were followed by the Swallows, the Flamingos, the Crows, the Penguins, the Cardinals, the Eagles, the Robins, the Meadowlarks, the Falcons, and the Wrens, among others.)

The Orioles' first record, "It's Too Soon to Know" / "Barbara Lee" was released on the *It's a Natural* label on August 21, 1948.<sup>113</sup> (After National Records complained that "Natural" was too similar to "National," Blaine moved the Orioles to the Jubilee label.)<sup>114</sup> Both songs were written by Deborah Chessler. "It's Too Soon to Know" was a slow, romantic ballad that featured Sonny Til's soaring tenor over wordless background vocals with minimal, understated instrumental accompaniment. George Nelson took over the lead vocal on the song's middle section, which would be a common feature on Oriole's records. "Barbara Lee" was a catchy, uptempo number with scat singing in the middle.

The disc jockeys Willie Bryant and Ray Carroll played "It's Too Soon to Know" on their late-night r&b show at New York radio station WHOM, which was broadcast from a storefront in Harlem.<sup>115</sup> They



immediately were inundated with calls from listeners asking them to play the song again.<sup>116</sup> "It's Too Soon to Know" ended up going to number one on the rhythm and blues charts in September 1948 and crossing over to number 13 on the pop charts.<sup>117</sup> The record made the Orioles into stars and Sonny Til into a teen idol.

To cash in on the success of "It's Too Soon to Know," other artists rushed out cover versions of the song and it became a hit a few times over. In October 1948, Dinah Washington's version of "It's Too Soon to Know" went to number two on the rhythm and blues charts, while Ella Fitzgerald's version went to number six.<sup>118</sup> In November 1948, the Ravens version of the song went to number 11 on the rhythm and blues charts.<sup>119</sup> Over the years, many other artists have covered the song including Tony Bennett, Pat Boone, the Charioteers, Savannah Churchill, Ronnie Deauville, the Deep River Boys, Glenn Frey, Little Esther Phillips, Lee Richardson, Marion Robinson, Irma Thomas, the Jimmy Valentine Quintet, and Timi Yuro.

The Orioles followed up "It's Too Soon to Know" with a seasonal number, "(It's Gonna Be a) Lonely Christmas." The song became a top-ten hit on the rhythm and blues charts in December 1948.<sup>120</sup>

In the spring of 1949, the Orioles returned to number one on the rhythm and blues charts with their version of Deborah Chessler's "Tell Me So," another slow, romantic ballad.<sup>121</sup> The group continued to score hits on the rhythm and blues charts throughout 1949 with "A Kiss and a Rose," "I Challenge Your Kiss," and "Forgive and Forget."<sup>122</sup> The Orioles concluded the year by scoring a top-ten hit on the rhythm and blues charts with their version of Frank Loesser's holiday classic, "What Are You Doing New Year's Eve."<sup>123</sup>

In November 5, 1950, the group was struck by tragedy when Tommy Gaither, George Nelson, and Johnny Reed were involved in a serious automobile accident while returning from a show in Hempstead,



New York.<sup>124</sup> The accident occurred around 6:30 in the morning on Route 40 about three miles north of Baltimore.<sup>125</sup> Tommy Gaither, who was driving, apparently fell asleep at the wheel and lost control of the car.<sup>126</sup> The car went onto the grass plot, careened across the highway, and went into the parking lot of a drive-in restaurant.<sup>127</sup> The car turned over several times before colliding with the front of the restaurant.<sup>128</sup> The three group members were rushed to Baltimore City Hospital where Gaither was pronounced dead on arrival, Nelson was diagnosed with a sprained neck, and Reed was diagnosed with internal injuries.<sup>129</sup> Sonny Til, Alex Sharp, Deborah Chessler, and her mother, Irene, were traveling in another car, had become separated from the first car, and were not aware of the accident at the time that it occurred.<sup>130</sup>

On November 26, the Orioles performed a benefit show at the Starlight Ballroom in Baltimore to raise money for Gaither's widow and four children.<sup>131</sup> At the show, the group introduced the song, "Pal of Mine," which they would later record, as a tribute to Gaither.<sup>132</sup>

Gaither was replaced on guitar by Ralph Williams and the group also added Charles Harris on piano.<sup>133</sup>

In early 1952, the Orioles returned to the rhythm and blues charts with their version of the blues standard "Baby, Please Don't Go," which originally was recorded by Big Joe Williams in 1935.<sup>134</sup> The Orioles version of the song featured call and response vocals and sax and guitar solos with the group singing nonsense phrases in the background.

In the spring of 1953, George Nelson left the Orioles and was replaced by Gregory Carroll, who had been the second tenor in the Baltimore-based 4 Buddies.<sup>135</sup> Shortly afterwards, Ralph Williams left the group and was replaced by Chauncy "Lord" Westbrook.<sup>136</sup>

In the summer of 1953, the Orioles scored the biggest hit of their career with "Crying in the Chapel." The song originally had been recorded by the country singer Darrell Glenn and was written by his father, Artie Glenn.<sup>137</sup> The Orioles version of the song featured one of Sonny Til's greatest vocal performances backed by chimes and wordless vocal harmonies. The song went to number one on the rhythm and blues charts and crossed over to number 11 on the pop charts.<sup>138</sup>

The Orioles scored a follow-up hit with the similar-sounding "In the Mission of St. Augustine."<sup>139</sup> Other efforts to duplicate the success of "Crying in the Chapel" with "The Robe of Calvary" and "In the Chapel in the Moonlight" were less successful.

In the fall of 1954, exhausted from touring with the group and traveling to New York to deal with business, Deborah Chessler departed as the Orioles' manager.<sup>140</sup> In early 1955, Johnny Reed left the group, followed shortly by Alex Sharp and the other remaining members.<sup>141</sup> By that point, the group was no longer

scoring hits, was not obtaining as many bookings, and had to compete with other r&b vocal groups such as the Clovers and the Dominoes.<sup>142</sup>

Sonny Til recruited the members of a group called the Regals to form a new lineup of the Orioles.<sup>143</sup> In May 1956, the Orioles left Jubilee and signed with the Vee Jay label but failed to score any further hits.<sup>144</sup>

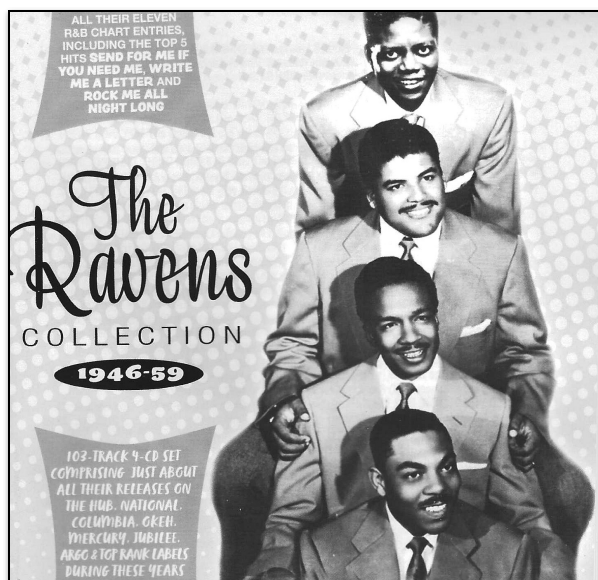
Sonny Til would continue to perform and record both as a solo artist with various lineups of the Orioles until his death from a heart attack on December 9, 1981 at the age of 53.<sup>145</sup> He was predeceased by two of the other original members of the group, George Nelson, who died from an asthma attack on June 30, 1959, and Alex Sharp, who died of a heart attack on January 3, 1970.<sup>146</sup> The last surviving member of the original lineup, Johnny Reed, died on June 18, 2005.<sup>147</sup> Deborah Chessler died on October 10, 2012 at the age of 89.<sup>148</sup>

## The Ravens

The Ravens were another pioneering rhythm and blues vocal group. While most vocal groups featured a tenor as the lead vocalist, the Ravens often used their bass singer, Jimmy "Ricky" Ricks, as the lead vocalist. Ricks had a distinctive bass voice and set the standard for bass singers among doo-wop groups.

James Thomas Ricks was born in Adrian, Georgia in 1924 where he attended the Adrian Chapel CME church and sang in the choir, before moving with his family to Jacksonville, Florida.<sup>149</sup> During World War II, Ricks moved to New York city where he worked as a waiter at Harkin's Four Hundred Tavern and sang with a group called the Melodeers.<sup>150</sup> Around 1945, Ricks formed the Ravens.<sup>151</sup> In addition to Ricks on bass vocals, the group's original lineup included Henry Oliver "Ollie" Jones on first tenor vocals, Leonard "Zeke" Puzey on second tenor vocals, and Warren Suttles on baritone vocals.<sup>152</sup> The group was managed by Ben Bart, who had worked with the Ink Spots and recently had established his own management agency, as well as his own record company, Hub Records.<sup>153</sup> For an accompanist, the group used pianist and arranger Howard Biggs, who had played with Luis Russell's Orchestra.<sup>154</sup>

The Ravens made their debut at Club Baron in Harlem and initially recorded for Ben Bart's Hub label.<sup>155</sup> Their first single, "Lullaby" / "Honey" was released in August 1946.<sup>156</sup> "Lullaby" was an old-fashioned-sounding, sentimental ballad with a lead vocal by Leonard Puzey and a prominent bass vocal by Jimmy Ricks. "Honey," with a lead vocal by Jimmy Ricks, was an old Tin Pan Alley number that had been a hit for Rudie Vallee.<sup>157</sup> In October 1946, the group raised their public profile by appearing on the *Arthur Godfrey Talent Scouts* show on CBS radio.<sup>158</sup> In late



1946 or early 1947, Ollie Jones left the group and was replaced as first tenor by Maithe William Marshall, who had appeared in the Broadway production of *Carmen Jones*.<sup>159</sup>

After a couple more releases on Hub, the Ravens signed with National Records, a larger independent label with better distribution.<sup>160</sup>

In early 1948, the Ravens scored their first hit with "Write Me a Letter," a jump blues number with Jimmy Ricks singing over stride piano and the group members harmonizing in the background. The song went to number 5 on the r&b charts and crossed over to number 24 on the pop charts.<sup>161</sup> The group then scored another hit on the r&b charts with a jazzy, gently swinging version of "Ol Man River," from the Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein musical *Showboat*.<sup>162</sup> Over the summer the group returned to the r&b charts with "Send for Me If You Need Me," another jump blues tune.<sup>163</sup>

To cash in on the Ravens success, King Records purchased some of their earlier recordings for the Hub label and reissued the song "Bye Bye Baby Blues," which became a hit this time.<sup>164</sup> In the fall, the Ravens scored a double-sided hit with "Be on Your Merry Way," a jazzy blues ballad in the vein of Charles Brown, and their cover of the Orioles hit "It's Too Soon to Know."<sup>165</sup> During the holiday season, the group scored another two-sided hit with their versions of "Silent Night" and "White Christmas."<sup>166</sup> The group performed "Silent Night" as a slow ballad with group harmony, while they gave "White Christmas" an upbeat, jump blues treatment that subsequently was copied by the Drifters and Elvis Presley.

In January 1949, the Ravens made their first t.v. appearance, performing on Ed Sullivan's *Toast of the Town*.<sup>167</sup> Also in early 1949, the group's accompanist Howard Briggs departed and was replaced by pianist and arranger Bill Sandford.<sup>168</sup>

In the summer of 1949, the group hit the r&b charts again with "Ricky's Blues," a jump blues with humorous lyrics.<sup>169</sup> Early the following year, the group returned to the r&b charts with "Don't Have to Ride No More," an upbeat, fast-paced number on which they were backed by pounding piano triplets for a sound very close to rock 'n' roll.<sup>170</sup> Also in early 1950, Warren Suttles left the group and was replaced by Louis Heyward.<sup>171</sup>

In the spring of 1950 the group released "Count Every Star," which is one of the earliest recordings to contain all of the elements of doo wop, with Louis Hayward's lead vocal backed by a wordless high tenor vocal, a prominent bass vocal, and group harmonies.<sup>172</sup>

After recording for Columbia and its Okeh subsidiary during 1950 and 51, the Ravens signed with Mercury Records in October 1951.<sup>173</sup> The group also had continued to undergo personnel changes and at this point the lineup consisted of Jimmy Ricks on bass vocals, Joe Van Loan on first tenor vocals, Jimmie Steward on second tenor vocals, and Louis Frazier on baritone vocals.<sup>174</sup> In the late summer of 1952, the group scored one of their biggest hits, going to number four on the r&b charts with "Rock Me All Night Long," a rocking, piano-driven number with a catchy refrain.<sup>175</sup>

"Rock Me All Night Long" would prove to be the group's last hit. Over the next few years, the group continued to experience personnel changes with various members, including Jimmy Ricks, leaving and then returning to the group.<sup>176</sup> Various lineups of the group continued to record for Jubilee and the Chess subsidiary Argo, but without any success.<sup>177</sup> In early 1956, Jimmy Ricks left the group for good to pursue a solo career.<sup>178</sup> Eventually, during the early '70s, Ricks became a vocalist with Count Basie's band.<sup>179</sup> Ricks died on July 2, 1974 at the age of 49.<sup>180</sup>

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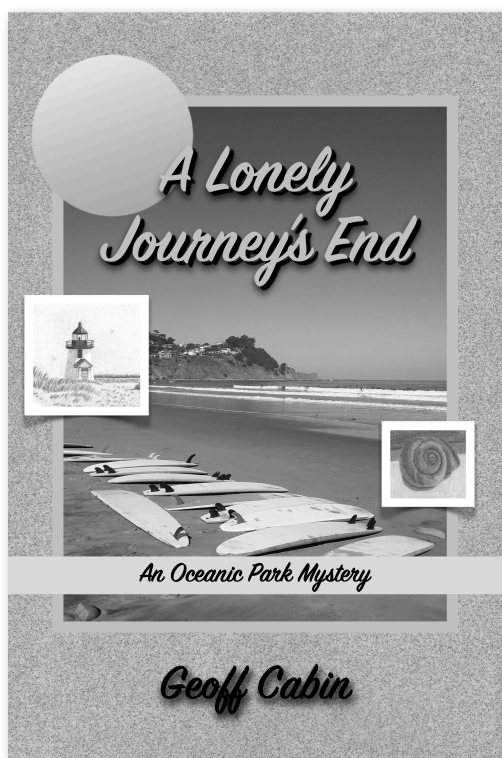
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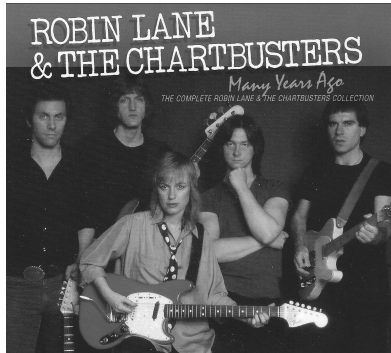
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# REVIEWS



***Many Years Ago: The Complete Robin Lane & the Chartbusters Collection: Robin Lane & the Chartbusters***  
(Blixa Sounds)

By Beverly Paterson

Prior to the birth of The Chartbusters, singer, songwriter and guitarist Robin Lane had already acquired a taste of fame, having contributed background vocals to "Round & Round (It Won't Be Long)" on Neil Young's 1969 *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere* album.

Based in Los Angeles and a folk artist by trade, Robin bid farewell to the West Coast and her musical roots in the mid-70s. Settling in Boston, she was inspired by the region's fertile scene, bursting with the exciting new sounds of punk rock and new wave.

Taking on the role of lead singer, Robin formed The Chartbusters in 1978, which also included guitarists and vocalists Asa Brebner and Leroy Radcliffe (who both previously played with Jonathan Richman and The Modern Lovers), bassist and vocalist Scott Baerenwald and



Robin Lane & the Chartbusters. Left to right: Tim Jackson, Leroy Radcliffe, Robin Lane, Scott Baerenwald, and Asa Brebner. (Courtesy Warner Bros.)

drummer and vocalist Tim Jackson.

Honing their chops in local clubs, Robin Lane & The Chartbusters quickly garnered the praise of fans and the press. The band eventually signed a contract with Warner Brothers, resulting in a pair of albums (*Robin Lane & The Chartbusters* from 1980 and *Imitation Life* from 1981) and an EP called *5 Live* that was issued shortly after the band's debut endeavor.

Comprised of three discs, *Many Years Ago (The Complete Robin Lane & The Chartbusters Collection)* contains these Warner Brothers recordings, along with demos, unreleased tapes, Robin's solo project, *Heart Connection* from 1984 and a thick booklet documenting the band's history.

As this smartly-constructed anthology attests, Robin Lane & The Chartbusters

possessed all the prime ingredients to match their namesake. But the only song that came close to attaining serious hit single status was "When Things Go Wrong," which peaked at number 87 and was featured on the band's first album. Wrapped in ringing riffs and gripping pulsations, the catchy cut pinned radio-friendly pop sensibilities to a brooding edginess with verve and style.

However, "When Things Go Wrong" only scrapes the surface of the great material to be had here. Guided by Robin's tuneful and confident vocals, the band is consistently airtight, dispensing deftly-crafted ditties shaped of practical arrangements and penetrating hooks. Although influential punk and new wave values do trickle through the sessions, Robin Lane & The



Chartbusters were basically no-frills pop rockers.

Drenched in jingly guitars and breezy harmonies, "Don't Cry" is further magnified by a run of bracing time changes and "Why Do You Tell Me Lies" moves to a slinky cadence. A meeting of twitchy and bobbing rhythms direct "It'll Only Hurt A Little While" and "Many Years Ago" races with a determined urgency, fired by the fierce drumming and commanding vocal power driving the track.

The bright and sunny "Kathy Lee" shimmers to the extreme with chiming guitars and sweetly-seasoned melodies, where "Send Me An Angel" rocks good and hard, supported by a shouting chorus. Exploding with aggression, volume and mean and lean licks, "I Don't Want To Know," "Imitation Life" and "No Control" cycle in as punchy punkers, and then there is "Waitin' In Line," which favors a sassy and swaggering pose. Twangy chords, complemented by crackling instrumentation top the country-folk-pop flavorings of "Rose For Sharon" and "Never Enough," while the positively radiant "The Letter" holds forth as a pitch-perfect pop song.

A mellow side of Robin Lane & The Chartbusters is exhibited on the pretty ballad, "For You," and the delicately-executed "Little Bird," which is braided with weeping violins.

Robin Lane's excellent solo work equals the energy and enthusiasm of the offerings by The Chartbusters, bolstered by a clean and polished production finish. As examples, sparkling textures, gushing with beauty and grace adorn "The Irish Song," "Shot In The Dark" blazes to a tough, insistent beat and "Take Back The Night" entails a larger than life presentation, fueled by emotionally-charged vocals, a chilling tone and lustrous orchestration.

There is no denying *Many Years Ago* (*The Complete Robin*

*Lane & The Chartbusters Collection*) is a lot of music to absorb. But because these songs are so gosh darn fetching, it will be impossible not to listen to the package from beginning to end. Bearing weight and gravity, Robin Lane & The Chartbusters were indeed a solid band.

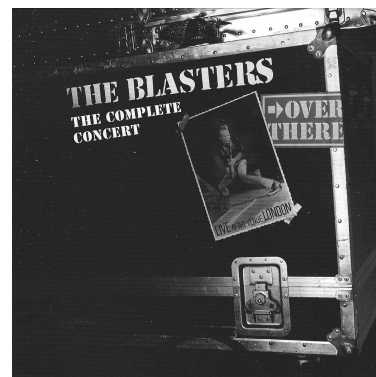


**Dial "Z" for ZOCKO!: ZOCKO!**  
(Beef Platter)

By Geoff Cabin

The surf-and-garage-rock band ZOCKO! makes its recording debut with the EP, *Dial "Z" for ZOCKO!*, and it's a very strong debut. The EP contains four guitar instrumentals. It kicks off with "Fenwick Drainer," a catchy, surf-style number with a driving rhythm and some impressive tremolo picking. The band next goes into spaghetti-western territory with "The Lonesome Death of Billy Jack," an atmospheric number that features Latin-tinged guitar and castanets. "My Summer with Ritu" is a breezy, melodic number with lots of chiming guitar and a slow interlude in the middle. The EP closes with a raucous and rocked-up version of the irresistibly-catchy "A Taste of Honey," which was a big hit for Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass back in 1965. *Dial "Z" for ZOCKO!* is a very impressive and enjoyable start for an outstanding band.

([beefplatter.com](http://beefplatter.com) / [zocko1.bandcamp.com](http://zocko1.bandcamp.com))



**Over There: Live at the Venue,  
London: The Complete Concert:  
The Blasters**  
(Liberation Hall)

By Geoff Cabin

*Over There: Live at the Venue, London* was recorded at a concert by the Blasters at the Venue in London on May 21, 1982. It originally was released in September, 1982 as a six-song EP (with a seventh song on the cassette version). The 2002 compilation album, *Testament*, included an additional three songs from the concert. Now, Liberation Hall has released the entire 23-song concert for the first time. The album captures a fantastic performance by the Blasters, bursting with energy and excitement.

At the time of the concert, the Blasters had two albums under their belt - their debut album, *American Music*, on the small, independent Rollin' Rock label, and their first major-label album, *The Blasters*, on Slash/Warner Bros. The concert features a selection of songs from the two albums as well as covers of rockabilly and rhythm and blues songs.

All of the band's strengths are on display throughout the show - Phil Alvin's impassioned and soulful vocals, Dave Alvin's fiery guitar solos, Gene Taylor's virtuosic piano, and the tight, rock-solid rhythms of bassist John Bazz and drummer Bill Bateman. The Blasters are augmented on several



The Blasters. Left to right: John Bazz, Gene Taylor, Bill Bateman, Phil Alvin, and Dave Alvin. (Courtesy Slash Records.)

songs by the saxophone section of Lee Allen, the great New Orleans saxophonist who played with Fats Domino and Little Richard, among others, and Steve Berlin, who would go on to join Los Lobos.

The Blasters open the show with an intense, hard-driving version of "This Is It" and never let up for a second. The set includes knockout-versions of Blasters classics like "No Other Girl," "Hollywood Bed," "Marie Marie," "American Music," and "So Long Baby, Goodbye." The band turns in a spirited version of Lee Allen's 1958 instrumental hit, "Walkin' with Mr. Lee." Their cover of the Big Joe Turner and Pete Johnson boogie-woogie classic, "Roll 'Em Pete," provides a showcase for some of Gene Taylor's most dynamic piano playing. Phil Alvin delivers a soulful vocal on a cover of Otis Redding's "These Arms of Mine." And the band turns in great, hard-rocking covers of Jerry Lee Lewis' "High School Confidential" and Little Richard's "Keep a Knockin'."

It's great to hear this show in its entirety and it makes for a fantastic live album.



**Sweetheart of the Rodeo: 50th Anniversary Live**  
**Roger McGuinn, Chris Hillman**  
**and Marty Stuart**  
 (Friday Music)

By Gary Pig Gold

Many, many years ago Paul McCartney, speaking words of wisdom in reply to what I'm sure must have been the umpteenth Beatle reunion inquiry of the day, replied: "You can't rehear a soufflé."

And it is in that spirit I have approached most every retreat / reunion / remastering even of yesterday's highlights and heroes: With what I have learned to be extreme caution and trepidation.

Cynical? Perhaps. But I fear I've just been burned quite a few times too many by anxiously, yet innocently entertaining such pursuits.

I'm most pleased to report, however, that Friday Music's document of the 2018 Sweetheart of the Rodeo Anniversary Tour is the exception. It is a genuine, most obviously heartfelt tribute to that vintage-'68 "little album that could" ...as in could rise above its initial inexplicable, unforgivably lukewarm response to slowly but surely grow and grow across subsequent decades to become the standard-bearer it is today. As all those once-misunderstood gems, from *Pet Sounds* on down, have.

More than filled out with a generous helping of gems not present on the original *Sweetheart*, kicking straight off with a most appropriate "My Back Pages," the two surviving Byrds alongside Marty Stuart's quite fabulous Superlatives remain uniformly respectful to the classic album. As well they should be; recasting or reimagining – as in, gulp, "updating" – such an iconic template would be folly indeed.

After an opening appetizer of, among others, my childhood 6-transistor favourite "Mr. Spaceman" plus an absolutely exquisite reading of Goffin & King's easy riding "Wasn't Born To Follow" complete with post-production phasing, our *Sweetheart's* eleven are then faithfully recreated. The highlight to my ears being a beautiful rendition of Gram Parsons' "One Hundred Years From Now" featuring what may very well be Chris Hillman's greatest vocal performance *ever*. Yes, you heard me correctly.

And while one may quibble with the *too* frequent to some between-song patter – I'm still curious as to why McGuinn intro'd "Nothing Was Delivered" as, and I quote, Dylan's "punk country" – I actually relish how these little spoken interludes give this disc a true audio-documentary You Are There feel.

My only quibble would be Mr. Stuart (as *The New York Times* would call him) too often hot-

dogging up the proverbial storm with his lead guitar, tending to overwhelm rather than support his bandmates: Something that B-bending master Clarence White could *never* be accused of. Ditto Chris Scruggs' (yes, Earl's grandson) and his pedal steel repeatedly showing off when he should have been showing restraint.

That said, Marty's mandolin playing throughout is a joy to behold; on "Pretty Boy Floyd" in particular. And, naturally, McGuinn's 12-string forever remains as tastefully played as always.

So! Garnish with encore performances of "I'll Feel A Whole Lot Better" (ahhh, sweet Gene!) and a "So You Want To Be a Rock 'n' Roll Star" which *really* raises things to full flyte – though "Eight Miles High"s sublime 1966 magnificence is quite beyond the reach of this present-day 2018 ensemble – and one would be hard-pressed to spend a better hour and thirteen minutes next time the mood strikes to go all Byrds.

In other words then? *This* sonic soufflé is the exception to the rule.



***The Promise: Jeremy***  
(JAM)

By Geoff Cabin

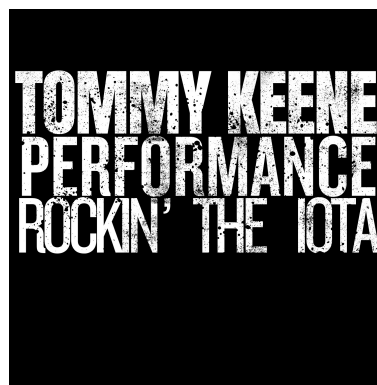
*The Promise* is the latest album of guitar-based pop rock by Jeremy. Jeremy has studied and mastered the classic pop and rock sounds of the '60s, '70s, and '80s and uses them as a foundation on which to build his own sound. On

the album, Jeremy demonstrates strong songcraft and musicianship, employing a broad array of guitar sounds and styles. He also receives strong support from longtime collaborator Dave Dietrich on drums.

The album kicks off with the title track, which features echo-laden vocals, a buoyant melody, and Byrds-style guitar solos. On "I Wanna Be with You," Jeremy sets a catchy pop tune to a hard-driving guitar riff and adds a shredding guitar solo. "Got to Go" is a psychedelic rock number reminiscent of Cream and Jimi Hendrix. The song is driven by dynamic drumming and a guitar riff reminiscent of "Sunshine of Your Love" and provides a showcase for Jeremy's guitar pyrotechnics. "Shake the Dust" is set to a John Lee Hooker-style boogie beat and augmented by bluesy guitar riffs. The ballad, "Over Now," features reflective lyrics and a bittersweet melody over layers of acoustic and electric guitars. On "Let's Go Up," Jeremy combines a catchy pop tune with a propulsive beat.

On *The Promise*, Jeremy continues to keep the classic pop and rock sounds alive while bringing them into the present day.

([www.jamrecordings.com](http://www.jamrecordings.com))



***Rockin' the Iota: Tommy Keene***

By Geoff Cabin

This is an archival live album by Tommy Keene recorded at the Iota Cafe in Arlington,

Virginia on August 23, 2002. Keene was a dynamic live performer and this album captures the energy and excitement of one of his concerts. The live format gives Keene a chance to stretch out a bit on guitar and the album is full of his electrifying guitar playing. Keene receives strong support from his crack band, which consisted of Steve Gerlach on guitar, Brad Quinn on bass, and John Richardson on drums.

At the time of the concert, Keene was touring in support of his then-current album *The Merry-Go-Round Broke Down*, and the set contains several songs from that album - the catchy, hard-driving rockers "Begin Where We End" and "The Man Without a Soul"; the jangly guitar pop of "Hanging Over My Head" and "Big Blue Sky"; the melodic and melancholy ballad "Circumstance"; and the fifteen-minute epic "The Final Hour." The set also contains razor-sharp versions of earlier Keene classics including "Long Time Missing," "Down, Down, Down," "Nothing Can Change You," "My Mother Looked Like Marilyn Monroe," and "Compromise."

The only shortcoming of the album is that it doesn't include the entire concert - three songs, "Back to Zero Now," "All Your Love Will Stay," and "Places That Are Gone," are missing, but that's a minor drawback.

Tommy Keene is sorely missed so it's really wonderful to have a new album by him. *Rockin' the Iota* demonstrates again what a brilliant performer Keene was. ([tommykeene.bandcamp.com](http://tommykeene.bandcamp.com))





***Land of Hope & Dreams: Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band***  
(Columbia)

By Geoff Cabin

This live EP was recorded on May 14 in Manchester, England on the first night of Bruce Springsteen's current European tour. It was Springsteen's first concert appearance since the reelection of Donald Trump, and Springsteen used the occasion to voice concerns about the direction that the United States is headed under Trump.

In his opening remarks Springsteen stated that "the America I love, the America I've written about, that has been a beacon of hope and liberty for 250 years, is currently in the hands of a corrupt, incompetent, and treasonous administration." In his introduction to "My City of Ruins," Springsteen catalogued many of the abuses of the Trump administration, including "...persecuting people for using their right to free speech and voicing dissent...taking satisfaction in abandoning the world's poorest children to sickness and death...rolling back historic civil rights legislation...defunding American universities that won't bow down to their ideological demands...removing residents off American streets and, without due process of law,...deporting them to foreign detention centers and prisons. This is all happening now."



Bruce Springsteen. (Rob DeMartin.)

Predictably, Trump was enraged and posted an unhinged diatribe on social media, calling Springsteen "...Highly Overrated... not a talented guy...a pushy, obnoxious JERK...dumb as a rock..." Trump concluded with more insults and what could be interpreted as a threat: "This dried-out 'prune' of a rocker (his skin is all atrophied!) ought to KEEP HIS MOUTH SHUT until he gets back into the Country...Then we'll all see how it goes for him!"

When Springsteen refused to be intimidated and continued to voice his concerns at subsequent concerts, Trump made another post on social media in which he stated that he would "call for a major investigation" into Springsteen's endorsement of Kamala Harris in the 2024 election. Again, refusing to be intimidated, Springsteen's label released this EP, only six days after the concert at which it was recorded. The EP contains four songs as well as Springsteen's opening remarks and his introduction to "My City of Ruins."

Taken together, the music and spoken words form an articulate and forceful response to Trump's attempts to undermine the Constitution and destroy democracy. Springsteen and the E

Street Band are now into their sixth decade of performing, and they still sound just as great, if not better, than ever. For this tour, they are augmented by four backing vocalists, a percussionist, and a four-piece horn section. Following Springsteen's introductory remarks, they go into "Land of Hope and Dreams," which is driven by a combination of guitar and mandolin and features Jake Clemons' powerful sax solos that conjure the spirit of his late uncle. The song is in the tradition of gospel songs, such as "This Train Is Bound for Glory," that use a train journey as a metaphor for redemption and a journey to freedom and the promised land. In Springsteen's song, all are welcome on the train. At the end of the song, Springsteen interpolates a bit of Curtis Mayfield's "People Get Ready," a song that uses similar train imagery. Next up is "Long Walk Home," a guitar-driven, mid-tempo rocker with a sing-along refrain. This song was written in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Iraq and is narrated by a man who returns to his hometown and finds that the people and places with whom he thought he shared common values have become unrecognizable. This is followed

by Springsteen's spoken remarks that lead into "My City of Ruins." This song always has had a strong gospel feeling and that feeling is enhanced by the backing singers and horn section. The song originally was written about the decline of Asbury Park, but, when it was included on *The Rising* in the aftermath of 9/11, the song, with its "rise up!" refrain, took on a broader meaning. In the current context it's "rise up!" refrain again takes on a new meaning. The EP ends with the concert's closing number, a cover of Bob Dylan's "Chimes of Freedom," which Springsteen last played on Amnesty International's *Human Rights Now!* tour back in 1988. This is one of Dylan's greatest songs, expressing empathy for the downtrodden and outcast with a rush of poetic imagery. Springsteen and the E Street Band give it a powerful performance backing its anthemic melody with chiming piano, ringing guitar, whirring organ.

With so many institutions and elected officials capitulating to Trump's authoritarian demands, it is encouraging to see someone with a public platform using it to speak out forcefully against Trump's abuses of power and in defiance of Trump's attempts to silence dissent. As Springsteen stated "the last check on power after the checks and balances of government have failed, are the people, you and me."



***The Future Is the Past: Jeremy*  
(JAM)**

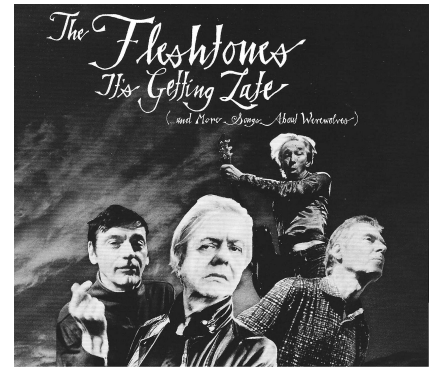
By Geoff Cabin

*The Future Is the Past* is the most recent collaboration between Jeremy and producer and multi-instrumentalist Ken Stringfellow. For the album, Jeremy has written another batch of skillfully-crafted pop-rock songs and Stringfellow once again has created strong sonic settings for them, featuring layered guitars and keyboards, choruses of backing vocals, and psychedelic flourishes.

The opening track, "Brand New Brain," features an irresistibly-catchy melody framed by an array of guitars. "Brighten My Day" is propelled by a catchy guitar riff and a driving beat and augmented by wordless backing vocals. The Pink Floyd-influenced "Time Flies" features an echo-laden vocal over an acoustic guitar and gradually develops into a swirling, psychedelic soundscape. "The Future Is the Past" is a piano-based ballad that builds to a climactic guitar solo. "The Writing's on the Wall" is a melodic, mid-tempo number with vocal harmonies, organ, and layers of guitar. The album's closing track, "Remember Tomorrow" is a moody, introspective ballad that concludes with a spacey, pastoral section.

On *The Future Is the Past*, the collaboration between Jeremy and Ken Stringfellow once again yields strong dividends.

([www.jamrecordings.com](http://www.jamrecordings.com))



***It's Getting Late (...and More Songs About Werewolves) : The Fleshtones*  
(Yep Roc)**

By Geoff Cabin

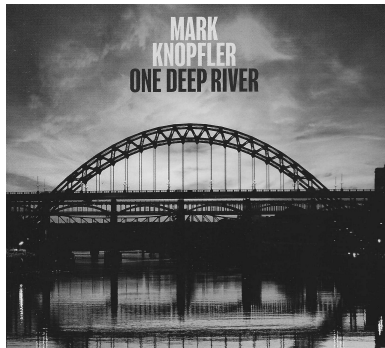
The latest album by the Fleshtones, *It's Getting Late (...and More Songs About Werewolves)* shows a band that, after nearly 50 years, possesses undiminished power and is going as strong as ever. The album is filled with the same sort of raucous, high-energy garage rock that the Fleshtones always have specialized in.

One of the standout tracks is "Come on Everybody Getting High with You Baby Tonight," an energetic rave-up featuring vocals alternating with organ riffs over booming drums. "Way of the World" has a catchy pop melody with an arrangement that features chiming piano and backing vocals. The band's cover of Johnny Rivers' "Love Me While You Can" is performed as a foot-stomping rocker with pumping keyboards, fuzz guitar, and shouted background vocals. "The Consequences" is a heavy-duty rocker driven by fuzz guitar and organ. "That's Why I'm Turning to You," is a soul-oriented number with a propulsive, four-on-the-floor dance groove. The band turns in a hard-driving cover of Lee Hazelwood's surf-guitar number, "The Hearse," which has been recorded by the Astronauts and Al Casey. The album-closing "It's Getting Late," is a melodic mid-



tempo rocker driven by a catchy riff played on guitar and harmonica.

It's great to see the Fleshtones still producing fantastic music after all of this time.



**One Deep River: Mark Knopfler**  
(British Grove Records / Blue Note Records)

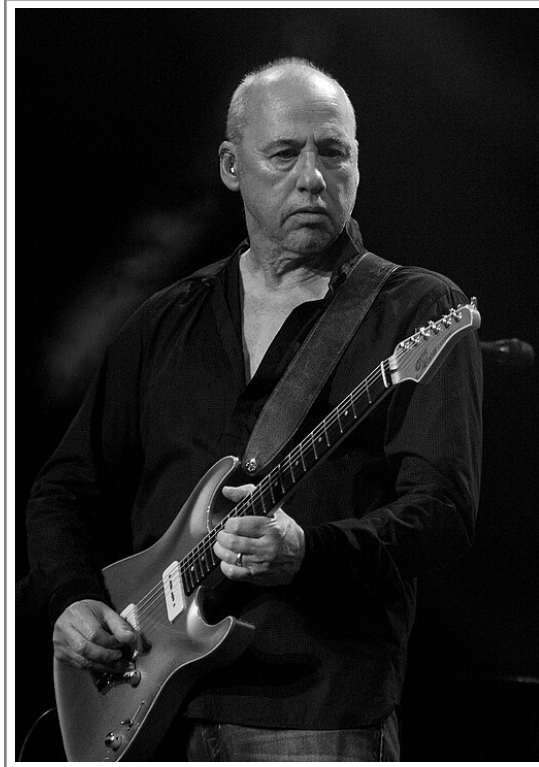
By Al Masciocchi

Up until two years ago I hadn't bought anything by Mark Knopfler for close to 30 years. I don't have any explanation for that. I was immediately a fan with "Sultans Of Swing" on Dire Straits' self-titled first album. I'll confess to thinking at the time "could that be Dylan?" If after the fact that seems a little silly, well, I wasn't alone in that; there are characteristics in his voice and phrasing that do suggest Dylan. And I loved Knopfler's soundtrack to *Local Hero* from the time I saw the movie 40+ years ago.

Then, about two years ago I found the first of a couple of Knopfler albums – 2000's *Sailing To Philadelphia* and 2007's *Kill To Get Crimson* - in the library sale rack for a dollar and now there is this, his latest album.

How have I been missing out on so much fine music???

In a way, it's hard for me to pin down what the appeal is. Knopfler comes close to a lot of lines that would be deal-breakers for my tastes but that's all he does, come close without crossing any lines –



Mark Knopfler. (Sebastien Gross, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.)

- There are so few rough edges that it comes close to new-age music but there are enough melodies (if not hooks) that it doesn't cross that line.

- His voice comes close to soporific but his lyrics, his tone, and his phrasing keep things engaging and on the right side of the line.

- The arrangements and production venture close to Steely Dan sterility without the negatives that come with that.

- If I read somewhere that Knopfler's guitar solos are "tasty" I'd take that as a negative; I'll refer to them as clean and concise and avoid those negative connotations

- Some of the lyrics tell stories while others are difficult to get into but the *sound* of the words and Knopfler's delivery make the meaning not so important.

In summary this is an album where the whole is much

greater than the sum of its parts. It can be rewarding as both background music or as something to listen to intently. I think this one has legs.

Well, I thought the review was done there. I was going to leave it overnight, give the album one more listen tomorrow and change if necessary. Then I went for a massage and spent two delightful hours, delightful, that is, except for the new age music playing. Try as I might, I couldn't fully ignore it. I did notice that it crossed every line that Knopfler avoided. Little in the way of melody, sterile, skilled but soulless. Made me

like *One Deep River* even more.