

REVIEWS **SHORTS**



At first, Australian singer-songwriter **NICOLA SCHULTZ** sounds a little like Heidi Talbot, on her full-length debut *Union*. Then her indie pop background bursts through in the multi-tracked backings compiled with producer/engineer Brian Mann and you see how comparisons with Björk came about. Catchy songs and nice guitars help make this a good one. [www.myspace.com/nicolaschultzmusic](http://www.myspace.com/nicolaschultzmusic)

**THE BAND OF HOLY JOY** return with a new single this month. 'Oh What A Thing, This Heart Of Man' is as elegant and eloquent as the best of their work and is the first of a series drawn from their radio play *The North Is Another Land*. Available to download now, a new album is due in May. [www.bohj.co.uk](http://www.bohj.co.uk)



A girl band from the Scottish borders, **THE DULL FUDDS** take a sideways look at life's ups, downs and sideways surprises on debut release *Gibberish*. Distinguished by having a lead flautist, a slightly crazed drummer and a songwriter of considerable wit in Katie Forbes, the band effortlessly fit between musical genres. [www.dullfudds.co.uk](http://www.dullfudds.co.uk)



**BENJAMIN FRANCIS LEFTWICH** makes his solo debut with an EP, *A Million Miles Out*. He's been around a while and this is a polished synthesis of all he's learned so far. [www.myspace.com/benjaminfrancisleftwich](http://www.myspace.com/benjaminfrancisleftwich)



**JAY GAUNT** plays harmonica like nobody else you've heard on his second album, *Harmonicipia*. The seven instrumentals and five songs with guest vocalists mix originals with covers by everyone from Bobby Charles to Peter Green. One question: electric washboard — isn't that kinda dangerous? [www.jaygaunt.com](http://www.jaygaunt.com)



**THE BLACKBERRY BUSHES** play and sing what can only be described as alt. bluegrass on their second album, *Little Bit Of Grace*. There's a real feet-up-and-take-it-easy feel about the record with gentle songs, strong harmonies and restrained accompaniments. Even the foot-tappers like 'Virginia' aren't too energetic. [www.theblackberrybushes.com](http://www.theblackberrybushes.com)

**JAREK ADAMÓW** presents *Etnomalia Projekt*, a collection of new Polish klezmer music. Jarek plays clarinet and kaval over a drums, bass and guitar trio. The style is gently melodic with the rhythms showing a definite jazz influence. Surprisingly good. [www.myspace.com/folkenmusic](http://www.myspace.com/folkenmusic)



*Sweet Time* is the fourth album by Wisconsin singer-songwriter **DAFNI**. Its laid-back country-jazz fusion makes for relaxed listening and there are some nice guitar licks from a number of sidemen. [www.dafni.us](http://www.dafni.us)



**ANNIE KEATING's** previous album, *Belmont*, was one of the delights of 2008. *Water Tower View* throttles back the hard rock somewhat leaving

her whisky-soaked voice in charge of an excellent set of country-blues songs. Support comes from a fine bunch of musicians who understand how little they sometimes need to do. [www.anniekeating.com](http://www.anniekeating.com)



**DAN KORN** makes his debut with the *Dustbowl* EP. Good songs but his voice seems a little too pure for his material. [www.myspace.com/danielkorn](http://www.myspace.com/danielkorn)

*Pennsylvania* is the second album from **ANNE STOTT**. Produced by Jack Petruzzelli, it matches her powerful voice and sometimes-spiky songs with some occasionally wild guitar that drives the record along. Well worth seeking out. [www.annestott.com](http://www.annestott.com)



They call **KASHMERE HAKIM** *The Hillsinger*, also the title of his first EP. From Marrakesh via Amsterdam he comes and strangeness follows. [www.kashmere.nl](http://www.kashmere.nl)



**BLAIR DUNLOP** makes his debut with *An EP*, a mixture of covers and traditional material. His vocal delivery, particularly of 'Canadee-i-o', seems rather too earnest but there is great potential here. [www.talkingelephant.com](http://www.talkingelephant.com)



**THE TREEHOUSE** call themselves alt.folk but if their five-track EP *Ore* is a fair representation then they are more indie-pop. Still nice, though. [www.buildthetreehouse.com](http://www.buildthetreehouse.com)

**KEITH & CHARLIE WELLINGS** are a father and son duo that plays Highland bagpipes and bodhran, even if they can't spell it. *Amazing Grace* includes 'classic' pipe tunes like 'Scotland The Brave' and 'Flowers Of The Forest'. Fine for the tourists but best avoided by everyone else. [www.myspace.com/keithcharliewellings](http://www.myspace.com/keithcharliewellings)



Bilbao-based, St Louis-born songwriter and guitarist **JOHN BOLDUAN's** influences range from Americana to British folk and classical music, all of which can be heard on his first solo release, *Can't Fight Fire With A Match*. A varied collection of songs and instrumentals, it's an album that showcases both his quirky song writing and his exquisite finger-style guitar playing. [www.myspace.com/johnbolduan](http://www.myspace.com/johnbolduan)



*Fracture*, the debut album from New York City's experimental free-jazz-rock hybrid **SCURVY**, is a set of largely improvised instrumentals that walk a very fine line between rhythm and chaos. They keep to that line thanks to a finely-tuned balancing act that juggles impressive instrumental skills, an uncanny band rapport and a whole lot of chutzpah. Not for the faint hearted! [www.myspace.com/scurvynyc](http://www.myspace.com/scurvynyc)



Citing influences as diverse as Stevie Ray Vaughan and James Taylor, the laid-back acoustic of South Wales singer-songwriter **MARK FORDE** has earned him a solid following in Australia, Europe and the USA. His second solo album, *West To The Sun*, which draws on his experiences of the past few years, shows him

to be a writer of catchy, melodic acoustic pop that hints at a love of West Coast Americana. [www.markforde.com](http://www.markforde.com)



Owing their genesis to the reunion tours of former band Exit 159, **KRISTIE STREMEL & THE 159ERS** are purveyors of heartfelt, rootsy, rock'n'roll-driven power pop à la Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers. Wearing its heart proudly on its sleeve, *Color Of Stars* brings the everyday lives, triumphs and heartbreaks of blue-collar America vividly to life. [www.kristiestremel.com](http://www.kristiestremel.com)



Erstwhile Sweet Water and Second Coming axe wielder **DUDLEY TAFT** turns his attention to the blues roots of rock with *Left For Dead*, an album of high-energy originals and well-chosen covers by the likes of Willie Dixon, Charlie Patton and Peter Green. A superb technician, Taft's playing also packs a powerful emotional punch that will endear him to fans of bands such as ZZ Top. [www.dudleytaft.com](http://www.dudleytaft.com)



Described by its author as "a foray into the mystical experiences of life itself" **JEFF FINLIN's** *The Tao Of Motor Oil* is the latest from one of America's great-unsung songwriters. With a lyrical economy that many writers might kill for, Finlin's songs explore love, life and the pursuit of the American dream, through a series of cinematic vignettes. [www.jeffinlin.com](http://www.jeffinlin.com)



Highly-rated US blues combo **BECKI SUE & HER BIG ROCKIN' DADDIES** cement their reputation with another dose of driving, no-nonsense blues boogie on *Big Rockin' Boogie*. Taking no prisoners they hit the ground running with 'Rocket In My Pocket' and keep the pedal to the metal until they fade away with 'Where My Money' an hour or so later. An album that makes you want to go out, throw down a couple of beers and make a fool of yourself on the dance floor. [www.bigrockindaddies.com](http://www.bigrockindaddies.com)



Formed from the ashes of London-based band The Bogarts, **SALOON DOGS** recorded *Shooting Star* in 1996, a year before they called it a day. Fourteen years later, with their imminent re-formation, the album (which has aged remarkably well) has finally been released and proves to be a set of melodic, acoustic pop distinguished by some sparkling vocal harmonies and inventive musical arrangements. [www.myspace.com/saloondogs](http://www.myspace.com/saloondogs)



Italian roots rockers **LOWLANDS** picked up many plaudits around the world for their 2008 debut, *Gypsy Child* looks set to build on that, nodding towards The Boss in places with some rousing Hammond-driven everyman anthems. [www.lowlandsband.com](http://www.lowlandsband.com)



It might sound like a classic 1940s country release but **CALEB KLAUDER's** *Western Country* is the bang-up-to-date third album from the talented singer, guitarist and mandolin player. Ably backed by twin fiddles, upright

bass, drums and guitar, it's a back-to-basics collection where Klauder's own compositions such as 'Worn Out Shoes' and 'Hole In My Heart' sit seamlessly alongside The Louvin Brothers' 'My Baby Came Back' and Rhodes/Hayes classic 'Satisfied Mind'. [www.calebklauder.com](http://www.calebklauder.com)



The brainchild of avant-garde popster and songwriter Wendy Spitzer, **FELIX OBELIX** utilise strange instrumental combinations to get across their exploration of the links of time and death to memory, on the aptly titled *The Tick Of The Clock, The Beat In The Chest*. Complex, catchy and defiantly oddball, this is music to the left of left of centre. [www.felixobelix.com](http://www.felixobelix.com)



David Bromberg taught **ELLY WININGER** to play guitar when she was in school and fifty years on she has released her third album, *Part Time Paradise*. The mixture of original songs, covers and traditional numbers is enjoyable and laid-back but needs something to set it on fire in exactly the way 'Somebody To Love' doesn't. [www.ellywinger.com](http://www.ellywinger.com)



The son of country legend Jimmie Dale, West Texan **COLIN GILMORE** is resolutely forging his own career path with his brand of melodic, guitar-driven country pop twang and wordy ruminations on life's rollercoaster ride. His second album, *Goodnight Lane*, reveals that vocal comparisons aside, Gilmore Jr is very much his own man. [www.colingilmore.com](http://www.colingilmore.com)



Hailing from Toronto via the Yukon, songstress **KIM BEGGS's** third album, *Blue Bones*, is a collection of thought provoking social commentaries ('Mama's Dress'), bittersweet love songs ('Maiden Heart') and well chosen cover versions including Patty Griffin's 'Trapeze' and Dylan's 'I'll Be Your Baby Tonight'. It's an evocative and impressive set. [www.kimbeggs.com](http://www.kimbeggs.com)



**ART HOUSE CINEMA** is apparently the power-pop project of Atlanta singer-songwriter Brent Daniel, but it sounds for all the world like Stephen Duffy, even down to the melodies. Really like him! If you enjoy Duffy's poppier stuff, you'll dig this. [www.myspace.com/brentdanielmusic](http://www.myspace.com/brentdanielmusic)



**BLUE EYED BLONDES** are Swedish duo Lina Lönnberg and Kristoffer Emanuelsson, and their eponymous five-track EP comprises some parched pre-war Americana in the manner of Welch and Rawlings. Quite lovely, and well worth looking out for. [www.myspace.com/theblueeyedblondes](http://www.myspace.com/theblueeyedblondes)



'Punk & Western' band **UMBLEDOWN** from Bremerton, Washington, are a bunch of young punks shy of a drink and a good time. The loutish hoedown music on *Empty Bottle* is the kind that never goes out of fashion, as the best of Old 97's and Slobberbone will surely attest. [www.tumbledownhq.com](http://www.tumbledownhq.com)