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BETTY DAVIS - Is It Love Or Desire

Light In The Attic 2009

An unreleased masterpiece: the gal became too nasty to flash it in the light of day but the shame isn't on the singer.

It's a paradox in the fact that there was something that even the hedonistic '70s couldn't tolerate, but for Island Records with their "anything great goes" policy, Betty Davis' "[Nasty Girl](#)", out in 1975, became the last drop - and a reason to drop the singer from their roster the following year when presented with this album. Fortunately, after gathering the archival moss for more than three decades, "Is It Love Or Desire" didn't lose a iota of its primal might, and if its title cut lacks an immediate hook, the sharply revealing lyrics make up for it - quite a shift of the grit in the punchy funk. A dirt of different kind is served in the belligerent "Stars Starve, You Know" which lays bare the downside of showbiz and throws the gauntlet to Chris Blackwell, but for all their sultriness "Whorey Angel", where keyboardist Fred Mills steps forward to duet with Betty, and "It's So Good", elevated to cloud nine with Carlos Morales' guitar orchestra, turn the dirt into the golden dust.

More so, for all the songs' boldness - what about the disco-slagging "Bottom Of The Barrel"? - on this album Davis sounds most vulnerable, hushing it all down to acoustic ballad in "When Romance Say Goodbye", a hit that never was. As totally unexpected comes the Chicago blues of "Let's Get Personal", after which Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown adding his violin to the closer, "For My Man", isn't that surprising - but its silky groove is! In this piercing light, keeping "Is It Love Or Desire" away from public view and effectively ruining the singer's career as a result feels like a major crime. But then, the album's long absence only stresses its timelessness.

****2/3



ALLAN HOLDSWORTH, ALAN PASQUA, JIMMY HASLIP, CHAD WACKERMAN - Blues For Tony

MoonJune 2009

A tribute to the lifetime achievement of the fallen hero.

Tony Williams would be the first to admit that "blues" doesn't always imply sadness, and this concert dedication to the great late drummer has his spirit all over it, even though there's no Williams-penned composition on offer. Rather than sticking to the obvious Tony's NEW LIFETIME cohorts Allan Holdsworth and Alan Pasqua joined forces with the equally gifted rhythm section, came up with new music and embarked on a tour the cream of which, recorded in Europe in May 2007, is gathered here.

Starting with Pasqua's electric piano surge of the title track, the excitement builds on thanks to the easy yet busy swing from Wackerman whose only concession to filling his predecessor's shoes is the drummer's frontal position that allows him both to lead and be led. Of course, that's the gist of all the fusion, and here's the reason why three numbers from NEW LIFETIME's debut, "Believe It", sound so fresh: "Proto-Cosmos" spacey and liquid, "Fred" a transparent flow with Haslip's bass bobbing under its rippled surface, and "Red Alert" funky and quirky, sharp and bursting at the aural seams when the groove overflows.

The genuine continuation of what was before comes in form of the new quartet's joint composition "It Must Be Jazz", where Holdsworth's guitar pulls a thread for the rest to hang on and shoot off from - from tight and speedy to loose and slow - and another guitar-based mid-tempo jive, "Pud Wud", while the tremendous reading of Allan's "Looking Glass" provides ample space for Alan to improv-wander. Still, the two veterans are at their most vertiginous in the unfathomable lyrical swirl of "San Michele" - it's there, in its spare, rarefied air, that the real blues lies. Blues like this was the life force for Tony Williams, which means what's preserved for posterity here is rather a celebration than tribute.



The rampage rages on: get blitzed to where the action is.

Once this scribe attended the show by Andy Scott's SWEET which was so lame it solidly proved the point that there couldn't be a band called so after Brian Connolly's death - but it takes no more than a minute of "Live! In America" to see there *is* vitality in [Steve Priest](#)'s version of the ensemble. One might swing the "everybody wants a piece of the action" quote, yet the opening song it comes from blows the cobwebs away. More so, the crowd noise mixed up and loud suggests the veteran bassist was right in restoring the old glory in 2008. And it's not for nothing that guitarist Stuart Smith with all his L.A. rock elite credentials abandoned the blooming career to join Priest and indulge in the classic riffing of "Windy City" and put "F.B.I." into "Blockbuster".

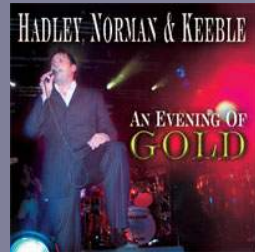
**SWEET -
Live! In America**

Sweet 2009

[Buy the CD](#)
available also on iTunes

This SWEET deliver highly charged greatest hits such as vertiginous "Ballroom Blitz" and the infectious "Fox On The Run" and give a new lease of life to the gems like "Sweet F. A", supplied with powerful Hammond solo from Stevie Stewart, and the poignantly groovy "Love Is Like Oxygen" that receive a fantastic time-stretch here. As for the vocal department, Joe Retta doesn't copy his charismatic predecessor but breathes his own fire into the tasty chestnuts, shoots "The Sixteens" through with faux-flamenco acoustic thread and leads the harmonious pack in "Little Willy". The performance brings on sheer joy solidly proving the fact that old heroes can be much more than shadows of their past.

****4/5



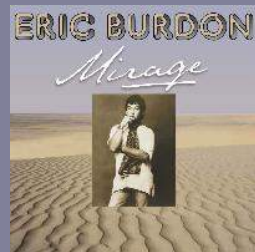
**HADLEY, NORMAN &
KEEBLE -
An Evening Of Gold**

Angel Air 2009

The best live album SPANDAU BALLET never came up with.

When SPANDAU BALLET sang of being indestructible it was as if they predicted their own existence between 1990 and 2009. Having split with the Kemp brothers, one of whom was the band's main writer, Tony Hadley, Steve Norman and John Keeble joined forces to continue the group's legacy, and did so with much gusto, as this concert, recorded in 2002 in Bradford, England, suggests. Basically a greatest hits collection, the performance effectively removes their New Romantics image, Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet" intro notwithstanding. While "Through The Barricades" gets shaped as a power ballad with a little Scottish march thrown in, "Lifeline" is calypso'ed to the gills and given a "Live And Let Die" coda. And if "I'll Fly For You" and "To Cut A Long Story Short" sound posh enough, in spite of Norman's sharp riffage and Keeble powerful drumming, GIN BLOSSOMS' "Hey Jealousy" rocks hard, and "Communication" is turned here into a racy rockabilly with Hadley putting on a Gene Vincent's mask.

There's kind laughter from all sides throughout the show, and it's a sign of maturity that "Only When You Leave" comes now not as shallow as before but amazingly heartfelt and full of swagger at the same time, as well as "Chant No. 1" with its accentuated bass, and "Gold" is roughed up without losing any of its magnetism, so the singer's James Bond reference feels most appropriate here. While the reformed SPANDAU BALLET work their way towards another live recording, this one is the next best thing - available also on [DVD](#).



**ERIC BURDON -
Mirage**

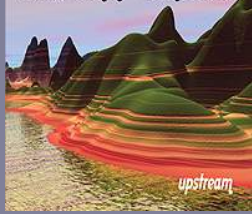
Esoteric 2009

After 35 years in wilderness, the shadow from the Animal's past inhabits a body.

One might suggest Eric Burdon was cursed with regard to the cinema, as both film projects he planned to star in and recorded music for didn't take off the ground with the tapes gathering dust in the vaults for a long time. But if the first one out, ["Comeback"](#), relied to some extent on singer's early classics, "Mirage", committed to tape in 1973 with the Englishman in top form and the Vietnam war still raging on, is a different proposition, although there's an echo of "The House Of The Rising Sun" in "Mind Arc". Never the one to hide his anger, here Burdon fights for the just cause, breathtakingly, for 73 minutes, and lets himself go only on the desperation-filled title track, based on the poem Jimi Hendrix wrote the night he died, and the 14-minute-long spaced-out sleepwalk of "Drifitin' / Geronimo's Last Stand".

Abandon to the fore, good old Eric rocks 'n' rolls all his wares on "Highway Mover" and its follow-up, "Cum". Elsewhere, though, the pace is predatory and funky from the off, from the "Dragon Lady" midnight crawling over the Eastern drone and the cold insistence of "Jim Crow", which becomes eerily chilling in the "Ghetto Child" walking blues and stiff-hard in the doomy, distorted, STOOGES-like carnival that is "River Of Blood" to turn the Animal into the Beast. Long tracks that allow the band, including STRAY DOG's Snuffy Walden on guitar, show their excellence make also room for Burdon's rich vocals to demonstrate everything he's got behind the raw surface - up to the dance groove of "First Site". This only exacerbates the fact that keeping this album from the public eye for so long borders on the criminal act, and it's great that this mistake has been corrected now.

Geoff Leigh Yumi Hara



**GEOFF LEIGH
& YUMI HARA -
Upstream**

MoonJune 2009

A West-East axis bold as love: the Canterbury vigor meets the Rising Sun delicacy.

Having played with Hugh Hopper in the [HUMI](#) project and ex-CRIMSO violin maestro [David Cross](#), Yumi Hara isn't new to the specific English scene and now she teams up with Geoff Leigh who first came to prominence with HENRY COW and later was all over the Canterbury field. Together, the two find common ground in the meditative tones set by the opening title track where Leigh's flute navigates the electronically enhanced crystal-cold air between the mountainous walls from the left side of Hara's piano that sometimes echoes the barrelhouse and dwells there in the rolling avant-garde of "The Strait".

More melodiously, "The Mountain Laughs" introduces Celtic folk motifs to the majestic Tibetan drone bordering on baroque fugue, and "Dolphin Chase" sees Yumi's ethereal voice and Geoff's saxes sending signals from underwater, while in "The Siren Returns" piano and flute rise Eastward-bound in a tired silky way. At the same time, "At The Temple Gate" repositions jazzy strain into the candescent cascades of Buddhist prayer, and "Stone Of The Beach" wraps up the vocals in a pulsating white noise glow. The result is strange but rapturously mesmerizing, and it's the music's deceptive simplicity that begs to try and sail upstream once and again.



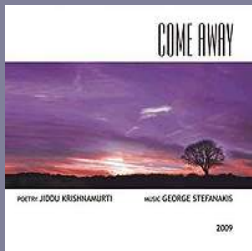
**BEGGARS OPERA -
Touching The Edge**

**Ricky Gardiner Songs
2009**

The progress goes on: a guitar is required, a hazman suit is optional.

Operating under their old band's name, guitarist Ricky Gardiner and keyboard player Virginia Scott, plus their son Tom on drums, don't feel confined by the BEGGARS OPERA past, and this album takes the listener, as its title suggests, to where today borders on tomorrow. For the most part not as scrupulously textured as their previous effort, ["Close To My Heart"](#), here Gardiner's riffs often sound as urban as his late '70s work with Bowie and Pop. Thus, "Dancer In The Wind" sets the tone for a nervy trip, its raw funk bristling under Scott's indie-shaped voice, to crystallize in the majestic coldness of "Escalator Of Tall Stories".

It's not all spikes, though - "Frozen On An Eye" and the Eastern-flavored "I Lie There" are snowblindingly lyrical, while "Million Miles" hides a folky drone and light skank in its core. The resolve to such a crypticism comes with "Auschwitz" that seems to not belong here, but shows some strangely satisfying logic: recorded ten years earlier, [the epic](#) underlines the tragedy inherent to our times, yet from its progressive guitar flight and Dante's verses a ray of hope shines. The epitome of it is "River Over Me", sax-splashed and rocking, and it's easy to get along with the flow and touch the edge.



**GEORGE STEFANAKIS
Come Away**

Studio Recording 2009

A philosopher's stone doesn't always mean good rock but there's beauty in the wisdom.

Some poems readily lend themselves to music, so it's rather surprising nobody turned Jiddu Krishnamurti's works into songs before George Stefanakis whose dedication to the Indian wordsmith's train of thought made him embark on a 10-disc journey of which "Come Away" is the first part. Far from meditation noodling many others offer in a similar situation, this album focuses on the songs that run from almost sublime to rather mediocre.

If the soft flow of "My Heart Dances With Thy Love" feels enchanting in the shroud of entwined guitars and strings pulled over Stefanakis' piano's bedrock, "At The Potter's Vessels" dwells in the sticky electrodance twilight. Then, while "In The Corruption Of The Known" sounds somewhat pretentious with its simplistic melody and a cello coating, and "I Am All" is an overlong, though warm, piano-and-woodwind waltz, sharp guitar riffing takes the "I Walked On A Path" tabla-driven trance buzz to some other plain. The problem is the best tunes make the first part of the record leaving the second pale. Hopefully, the next volume will be balanced better.

**1/2

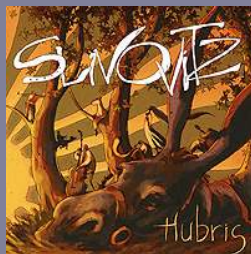


**GO WEST -
Kings Of Wishful
Thinking - Live**

Angel Air 2009

Pop royalty still reigns with their sleek flag flying colorfully.

Peter Cox and Richard Drummie may toil away far from public view but the songs their alliance brought to many a tray in the '80s, especially "We Close Our Eyes", can thrill when performed on stage if this show, recorded in England in 2003, is anything to go by. Starting with "Don't Look Down", a massive hit from the duo's debut album, and closing with the title track that spiced up "Pretty Woman", the band navigate safe waters of blue-eyed soul - most beautiful in the Otis-esque "The Sun And The Moon" and Smokie's "Tracks Of My Tears" - maybe too safe as it takes a real commitment to sit through these 78 minutes. But while "All Day, All Night" tests one's patience, "Innocence" and "SOS" rock the house, and as a soundtrack to an Indian summer the concert with the autumnal pieces like "Goodbye Girl" and "Glow" is good.



SLIVOVITZ - Hubris

MoonJune 2009

Sweet Balkan inebriation from Naples, strange brew for the head to reel and the feet to reek.

With the opening track titled "Zorn A Surriento", there's no question as to where this seven-piece source their klezmer flow from, but Domenico Angarano's supple bass and Pietro Santangelo's mad horns take the listener on somewhat more mellifluous adventure than the Tzadik master's and more quirky than Emir Kusturica can offer. Perfectly Italian, though threaded through funk, the drum-bristling and violin-warmed "Errore di Parallasse" may be in its vocal hum, yet not everything is so Eurocentric: "STRESS" glistens commercially a la Copacabana strip, and in "Caldo Bagno" Ry Cooder-ish slide oils the way for the West African chant to roll smoothly into a prog-rock atmospheric area and back into the polyrhythmic jungle.

On a gloomier note, "Ne Pesce" comes full of blues breeze, with a hint of KING CRIMSON's "Fallen Angel", whereas Jewish sadness sets the jive of "Damni Un Besh O" into the Sevillian sunset, after which the "CO2" acoustic ring feels like a fresh night oxygen, and the melancholic "Sig. M Rapito Dal Vento" a dizzy morning coda to a night on the tiles. All this makes for constant mood shifts, a slight vertigo but a nice aftertaste, the effect of "Hubris" akin to a pleasant intoxication.

****1/3



**BLACKHEART -
Invisible**

Angel Air 2009

What the title means is, you don't notice what you can't do without.

Chrissy Mostyn and Rick Pilkington, collectively known as BLACKHEART, are making their way to the top - and to the listeners' hearts - fast and steady, and if the duo's songs, save for the sprightly "The Sky And I", lack pop immediacy it only goes to show this little band are here to stay. So, building on the folky grounds laid out in their 2008's debut, "Indigo", the difficult second album isn't difficult at all.

It flows in with an urgent ring of "Wednesday Afternoon" that's increasingly endearing and flies out with the embrace of title track where the duo's voices strip bare their admirable vulnerability, but its real strength hides between the bookends. While "The Town Of Maybe" paints a jolly picture of lovers deep in doubt, the countrified majesty of "Farewell" followed by the delicate "Goodbye Everything" makes the parting play too big a role in the emotional whole. But it's a bittersweet cup one will hardly refuse to drink from, and there's no chance to stand against the drift of the piano-led and strings-awashed slow-burning "Flyaway" and, even more so, "Thank God You Found Me".

With songs like these, for BLACKHEART invisibility is not an option anymore.

****1/3



**BELIEVE -
This Bred Is Mine**

When there's not much to share, humble pie must be eaten.

With pedigree involving such pillars of Polish prog rock as SATELLITE and COLLAGE, one would expect BELIEVE's third album to present some challenge to the band, especially after the successful "[Hope To See Another Day](#)" live DVD, but the quintet prefer to play safe. The "Money For Nothing"-like riff of "Darkness" isn't bad as it bares the group's pop underbelly, and "This Is Life" fares soulfully, yet the title track's pathos drag and "Tales From Under The Tree" relies too heavily on "Every Breath You Take" to be either clever or funny. And while there's a lot of enjoyable instrumental passages - the violin assault in "And All The Roads" feels great - the lyrics are extremely, almost primitively banal, so to enjoy the orchestral sweep of "Mother" one should not listen to the words. A pleasant, if rather stale, work.

Metal Mind 2009

**2/3



**NINE BELOW ZERO -
It's Never Too Late**

Angel Air 2009

The 30th anniversary celebrated in (the same old) style with the SQUEEZE man in tow.

Three decades on the scene, this band show no sign of slowing down, and there's no reason to do so... if only for some nostalgia to kick in like it does in the "Hit The Spot" chug of Gerry McAvoy's bass and Brendan O'Neill's drums or the "Mechanic Man" roll of Dennis Greaves' guitar and Mark Feltham harmonica. The business is familiar and, therefore, effortless, yet one is guaranteed to get all sweaty in such a heated atmosphere.

Glenn Tillbrook, who added his voice and instruments to the half of the dozen tracks on the offer, must have been soaked to the bone most of the time, whether operating sitar on the dirty groove of "A Man Out Of You" or clapping to the infectious acoustic raga of "You're The Man". Things get even funkier with the title track's ensemble singing, and heavier and oilier with "I'm So Alone" where slide guitar shake it nicely. Add the humorous lyrics to the mix, and there's a strong contender for the "Brit Blues Album of the Year" laurel, even though re-writing "Gimme Some Lovin'" for "Hit The Ground Running" wasn't the best idea.



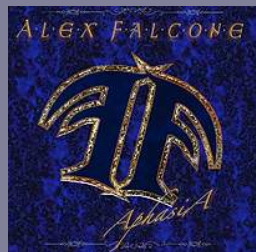
**GREGG ROLIE BAND -
Rain Dance - Live**

Rock Royce 2009

The SANTANA man goes it alone. He didn't change his evil ways and is all the better for it.

You can take Gregg Rolie out of Latin groove but you can't take Latin groove out of Gregg Rolie whose live band are possessed with the same excitement devils that made his appearance at Woodstock, as Carlos Santana's ensemble's singer and organist, such a storming success. Their smash, "Soul Sacrifice", is here in all its glory - there's Rolie's old compadre Mike Carabello on congas, opening the proceedings with "Jingo", alongside two other drummers - as well as other classics including the immortal pairing of Peter Green's "Black Magic Woman" and Gabor Szabo's "Gypsy Queen" that sound as fresh as four decades ago when Gregg's star was beginning to rise.

A command player, he's not domineering over this buzzing carnival of a show, but it's the same old saucy voice and tasty organ that's in the very center of it. The veteran's old ways meet his new roads in "Going Home" from his last solo album, which could have easily fit on "Abraxas", with Kurt Griffey's guitar lines shaped close to those of Rolie's erstwhile comandante. There's surprising, and uprising, appearance of "No One To Depend On", rich on percussion, from "Santana", anchored on the mighty bass of Alphonso Johnson, another surprise being the total absence of JOURNEY material. Thankfully, Gregg's band's set includes his own take on the perennial desperation of "As The Years Go Passing By", taken to the vertiginous samba heights by frenetic keyboard dancing, and some more of his solo cuts of which the closer, "Bailamos El Son", follows "Oye Como Va" and ups the energy levels higher still: quite a feat! More so, the smooth, if incandescent and contagious, "Give It To Me" clearly demonstrates how much SANTANA lost when the diamond of their crown went shining for himself.



**ALEX FALCONE -
Aphasia**

Rock Royce 2009

Another star-studded, soul-warming endeavor that goes OTT in a good way.

The tendency's rather negative - inviting famed guests to leave their stamp on one's record make many of these sound homogeneous - but in the capable hands the results are often positive: nothing new can be pleasant. Signore Falcone knows his chosen genre through and through, so there's no language disorder, no matter what the album's title suggests, and his ivories provide a solid base for a pleasant collection of songs.

It's impossible not to savor "Heat" with its guitar riff-driven combination of pop synthesizers and operatic choir a la RHAPSODY whose bassist Alessandro Lotta anchors it all. Alex being no mean singer himself, the most convincing vocal performance comes courtesy of former RAINBOW warbler [Doogie White](#) on "Racin' With The Spirits", easily the strongest track on offer with its tasty keyboards solos. But if there's nothing wrong with the choice of collaborators, the cover fodder is ill-chosen: Luca Gasparini merely reprises his role as the singer of "Screamin' For You" by HEAVEN'S TOUCH, while SWEET's "Alexander Graham Bell" feels like a bad joke in the album's serious context. Still, when Falcone sticks to his own guns he shoots impressively, HOUSE OF LORDS' James Christian shining on the jazzed-up ride of "Why". With a grand new age of the title track as a finale, there's nothing not to like.



**TEN POLE TUDOR -
Made It This Far**

Angel Air 2009

The Bambi killer's on the loose again and rocking it fine.

It's quite fitting that in the year marking the coronation of Henry VIII his descendant comes back into the well-deserved spotlight. Having appeared in "The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle" and slated to take the singer's spot in SEX PISTOLS, in 1980 Edward Tudor-Pole signed to Stiff and released, as Ten Pole Tudor, two albums. Stunningly, with a few hits including "Swords Of A Thousand Men" which climbed to Top 10 the singer fell from the industry grace but never left music, gigging and recording - on one occasion, documented on this collection of previously unreleased songs from his last three decades, in Pete Townshend's studio when he met THE WHO man at an eatery on the way to a concert.

That's where the title track comes from: a slice of acoustic rockabilly pitched between Ed's hero Chuck Berry and THE RAMONES. Not so much punk in sound, the rebel attitude seeps through "Love The Mohican" where bluesy ballad turns to a mighty chant to get you hooked. American in its provenance Tudor's music might be - there's even a jolly version of "St. Louis Blues" on the offer - but it's so English, never more so than in the morris of "The Occasion" and the contagious, fiddle-and-accordion jig "Yippie Yi Yay". Throw in the mix a rock-steady remake of Tenpole's old song "Real Fun", plus "Football Yobbo" and "Football Rockabilly" and, as a contrast, sad calypso of "Last Order", and what you have is a cause for a celebration of the Tudor of today who prefers rock 'n' rolling to rolling the heads.



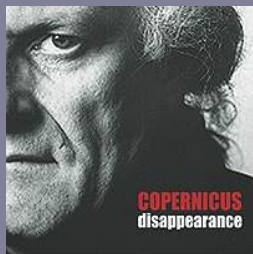
**CIRCLE OF FATE -
Back To Life**

Circle Of Fate 2009

Ten years on, the heavy Chicagoans go from strength to strength to below zero and back in the sun.

It takes some spins to get in the drift of this quartet who, at first, calms a listener with a folksy lilt and the ZEP-like riffing in "Sanctify" and show their soft belly in the memorable "Broke My Heart" only to get it all down for a much heavier guitar mire behind Michele Caruso's urgent pleading. But it's a rewarding journey to where the hell freezes over. Then, in "Skeletons", it gets hot with a Danny Charatin's axe attack and Mike Holewinski's bass swing, the leading lady's voice nearing that of [Doro Pesch](#) - there's some class on the offer, quite rocking in the desperation of "Your Gone" (*sic!*). Still, when the '90s alternative trend creeps in in "What If", a lapse of faith comes inevitably, yet it's impossible not to get sucked into the emotional vortex of "Fill The Void", and "It's All About You" rages nicely enough with its acoustic ring to welcome in another spin.

***1/2



**COPERNICUS -
Disappearance**

Nevermore / MoonJune
2009

A poet's view on non-existence of the universe we exist in.

It's not so serious and threatening as it may seem - the relations between the world, Joseph Smalkowski and his alter ego Copernicus are explained in the CD booklet - but there's enough confusion in the small philosopher's recital and the instantly composed music captured here. Simply, if it takes years for the light to reach us from the stars which can be long dead now that we see them, the nanoseconds that pass between the moment our eyes catch something and our brain register it also distance us from the event for ever, as if it never occurred. A sad thing, of course, but simple - without getting deep into physics.

But that's what Copernicus deceptively does in the deliciously plodding opener, "12 subatomic particles", to make the meek flee. Yet start from the epic, basics-overturning, Gershwin-quoting finale, "REVOLUTION!!", and work your way back from the large letters to the small, and there's an order and a lot to enjoy in his booming voice, canny word-web and the instrumental backing. On command of musical director Pierce Turner, it veers from the solemn spacey prog of "The Blind Zombies" which welcomes on Mozart-esque strings, to the "Atomic New Orleans" charged, swinging blues, and delicate flamenco of "The Quark Gluon Plasma". The most impressive - or expressive, if you like - piece is "Poor Homo Sapiens" sweetly bemoaning the futility of human life and celebrating the nothingness... But don't forget: what you're hearing has passed before it reached your ears, so a new spin of "Disappearance", this time from evolution to revolution, is inescapable.



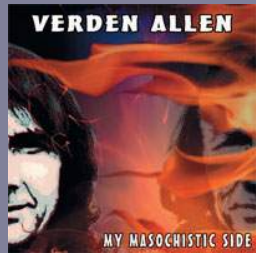
**TILT -
Million Dollar Wound**

Tilt 2009

The band's collective CV is impressive, the players' present joint venture lives up to their past.

When it comes to singers, the public often don't know who backs them, but if an artist relies on his or her instrumentalists, they must be good. So you could only imagine what the band consisting of those who played behind, for instance, Fish and KT Tunstall as well as SUGABABES and SIMPLE MINDS could sound like. No need to wonder now, with the advent of TILT, a project masterminded by bassist Steve Vantsis who bring to the world their debut work.

From the opening guitar riff courtesy of Robin Boulton you feel safe in their cradle of progressive rock with an alternative edge. Here, the loud-quiet dynamics don't jar and the heaviness is packed rather neat, especially when set against delicate folk song. And there's a tremendous folk song in the form of "Long Gone" with Kaela Rowan's tremulous vocals which electrifies and gains momentum along the way - much better than the "Answers" space groove that drags a bit. But the enchanting closer "Adore", swinging in limbo on a bass thread, makes this statement of intent almost shattering, true to the band's name.



**VERDEN ALLEN -
My Masochistic Side**

Angel Air 2009

On the verge of his old band's reunion, MOTT THE HOOPLE keyboardist digs deep down himself.

You'll be forgiven for thinking "Apollo 09" is a lost track of the HOOPLE, but that's not Ian Hunter and the bunch bovering up towards their 2009 bash, it's Verden Allen's private celebration, and that's as MOTT as it gets. If Hunter has always proudly worn Dylan's locks on his sleeve, the singer's erstwhile colleague's love for His Bobness has never been more obvious than on this, the organist's fourth solo album.

Of course, that's not the pain-loving facet that the veteran sings about in the title track, a boisterous love song which, like the rest of the record, has Allen shake everything he's got - not only bar-room piano and meaty organ but also acoustic guitar and every other instrument - with a funny fervor. Overdubs and the grand, churchy "Baby" notwithstanding, there's a live, first-take feel to it that leaves no place for pretention even in the Bach-tinged base of "Find Yourself", even though the pseudo-reggae "Funny Old World", as cute as it is, pinches a quote from QUEEN's "Under Pressure". It's nice to roll along to "Long Time No See", so loving this masochistic side comes easily.

***1/2

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