

MAVERICK

the voice of country, folk, bluegrass and roots music

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*Kenny
Chesney*

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plus *annie keating, blaze foley, ani difranco,
the mercury men, cw mcall, mark erelli,
malcolm holcombe and sooooo much more*

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MAVERICK

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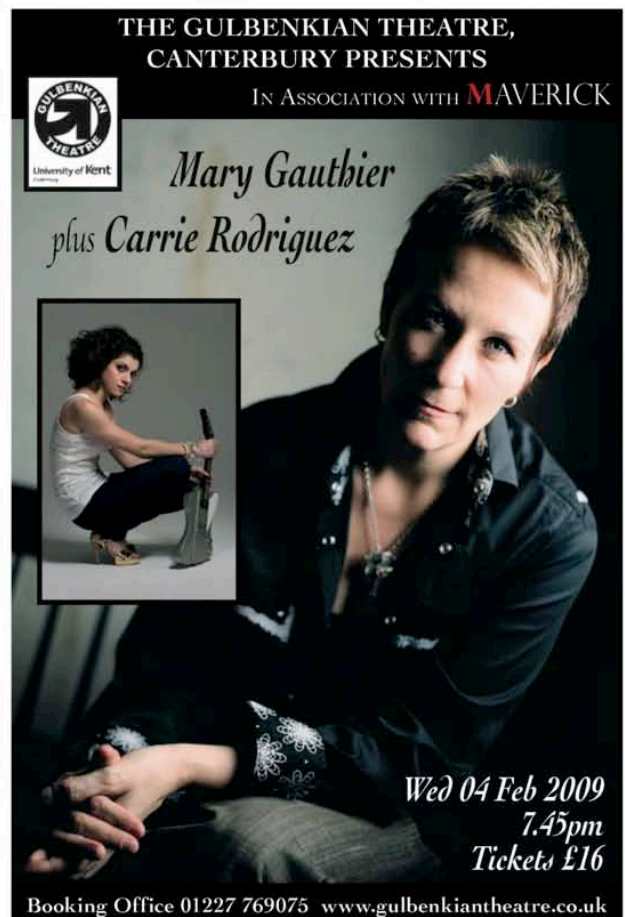
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NEW RELEASES

and huge, sometimes both of those things at the same time.' Clearly, with *SONGBOOK*, he's succeeded. The 14 tracks use the same colour palette as the likes of Sufjan Stevens, Adem and Jeffrey Lewis, mixing up angelic indie rock with quirky lo-fi folk. Soft finger-picked guitars sit alongside chugging xylophones, joyous rousing choruses of 'las' lead to heartbroken meanderings, and jumbles of home grown twangs contrast epic pulses of strings and piano.

It's an open, confessional diary of songs, which charts his return to Canada, following a love gone wrong. And while some tunes reveal more than others, each song is something of a surprise and delight. The pensive *Chorus of Wolves* is the soundtrack to many a dejected suburban teen. 'Somethings you don't learn at school' he sings, head held low in a wave of nostalgia. While the bitter but imaginative *Death By Ninja (A Love Song)* is wry escapism. 'I went to Ninja school to learn how to murder you with just one little punch' he whimpers, in amongst a cushion of oohs and twinkles. Apparently, this song was written as the tape rolled. Indeed, it all feels deceptively simple. But, I'm sure something this good is more than accidental. **HK**



Mark Mulholland
The Devil On The Stairs

Troubador TRBCD002

★★★★



The Dave Kusworth Group
The Brink

Troubador TRB5CD

★★★★

Brace of brand new release on aptly named label for underrated, yet rightly revered in certain bar-rooms, English balladeers and bit-part bards

More than a passing acquaintance of Kusworth and

fallen frere Nikki Sudden on their itinerant trails through Europe's sour marshlands and dingy dens of iniquity Mulholland spins similarly hypnotic and forlorn tales of heartbreak and longing in the face of ephemeral female fancies and self-inflicted failures lucidly and loosely spun from the foul, frothy end of flagons of wine and whisky but with a far folkier and blues-laden furrow.

Largely solo on acoustic with accompanying smatterings of harmonica, wozy organ and fiddle, this is a plaintive collection of log cabin laments and park-bench plainsong that belies the itinerant minstreling that has apparently been Mulholland's path. Heavy-lidded and saw-toothed with a voice fraught with experience but weathered with the warmth of a certain wisdom, this is a great late-night reflective collection, incandescently candlelit and replete with swirling psych tinges of the early Roy Harper—though any hallucinatory effects seem more from alcoholic delirium than acid—or Robert Wyatt and desultory poetry of Townes Van Zandt. Sure, there are undeniable shades of Dylan, but however much so the inescapable spectral beauty unveiled on centrepieces such as the title track, *Hands Of A Clock* and aching *Don't Want*

To Hear You Laugh is akin to denying, for instance, Mike Scott or Steve Earle's power to affect an audience just because they share an affinity to certain songwriters past. A deluxe edition includes an extra disc *LIVE AT THE TWELVE BAR*, a lone affair with a slew of different tracks to the album, helping make this a truly special purchase as well as being a perfect setting for his basement narrations of love's nomadic roads.

Eternally outfitted in Dickensian urchin pirate garb whilst apparently permanently slouched and buckled, Dave Kusworth should never be cast off as some cut-price Keef or Johnny Thunders clone. Sure, a trawl through his back-pages shows episodes of pilfering to rival Primal Scream but if Mr Richards could cull from crumpled cans of Special Brew and stale, expensive cheap red wine the lovelorn laments and faded fairytales that Kusworth almost casually unfurls like the doffing of a hat at the damsels of passing dignitaries and entangle them with the furore of the Faces on a mission of brigandage through CBGB's, then a certain rock'n'roll band of many years standing would be more than the cabaret curio they've currently been for more than half their lifespan.

Leigh Thomas *Voices Forgotten*

Garleighfield Records Mypace/leighthomasmusic

★★★★★

Stunning debut album from a Welsh honey who was born and bred in the USA

For a young woman Leigh Thomas has had a helluva life! Not only was she born on a British Airforce base in Louisiana and brought up as a 'Military Brat' (her words), her dad's job meant that she would move house every 3-4 years; then she eventually ran away from home at 16 and kept on running until by the time of her 30th birthday she reckons she's had 30 different homes in her life. Thankfully she's settled down now and all of those memories and experiences have been put to good use as material for the songs on *VOICES FORGOTTEN* her debut album.

CD opener, *Man From Idaho* tells the tale of a lover who just tries too hard to impress her; 'can't you just chill a little bit?/can't you ever let go?/can't you just slow down?' Her voice is cracked and broken, but you know in your heart of hearts she'll still take him back. *Least of all You* opens with the sentence: 'I had some really dark days in 1993' and then she goes on to tell us about cleaning floors, taking pills and drinking wine—just to get over another broken heart—and hints at 'what she nearly gave in to'. This is a beautifully haunting song and will touch a raw nerve in quite a few female listeners.

Each and every song tells a little story about Leigh Thomas' life in the age old manner of top quality country music. *I'm a Woman* is powerful opus about the strengths and weaknesses of being a woman; then she follows that with a foot-stomper of a song called *Men*, in which she lists the types of man that she's attracted to (sadly only fat middle-aged Geordies get missed out!). I can't find a bad track out of the 14 and my absolute favourite is the ethereal *Beautiful Pain*, but I'll leave it to you to listen and find out why.

Without wishing to stereotype or be sexist *VOICES FORGOTTEN* by Leigh Thomas will be loved and cherished by ladies who like a good tearjerker; but there's plenty in here for sensitive chaps like myself to enjoy and play over and over again.

PS: Leigh's dad was Welsh and she lives in Wales now; so I'm claiming her as a Brit! **AH**

