

Hit List

solid, with fiery backing from top Nashville session players. Mike Johnson's pedal steel and guitarists Rob McNelley and J. T. Corenflos provide the kind of aggressive playing that's long been part of Hank's sound.

"Keep The Change," the belligerent "Cow Turd Blues," and "Who's Taking Care of Number One" continue the political war. "Takin' Back The Country" invokes the melodies of Hank Sr.'s "Mind Your Own Business" and "Move It On Over" with samplings of Senior's vocals and a guitar-steel free-for-all. "Stock Market Blues" mocks the perils of investing.

Thirty-eight years ago, *Hank Williams Jr. and Friends* defined his own musical vision after years in Senior's shadow. So it's ironic how often Bocephus invokes his memory, reimagining "You Win

Again" as a rawer, more menacing rocker. Brad Paisley adds duet vocals and a few twangy licks of his own on "I'm Gonna Get Drunk And Play Hank Williams," as Johnson reprises the high-register licks Drifting Cowboy steel guitarist Don Helms made an integral part of Senior's sound.

Other originals celebrate rowdiness and roots. The Latin-flavored "Three Day Trip" tackles the former while "Old School" salutes long-time pals Johnny Cash, Dolly Parton, Jerry Lee Lewis, and the Marshall Tucker Band, with McNelley and Corenflos enhancing a solid arrangement. In one final tribute, he sings Merle Haggard's venerable "I Think I'll Just Stay Here And Drink" with its composer.

Agree with his politics or not, one thing Bocephus has never done over the

past three decades is sit on the fence. He certainly doesn't here. — **Rich Kienzle**



Calexico

Algiers

Anti Records

Selections from

Road Atlas 1998-2011

Quarter Stick

Calexico return with two releases: the band's first new album in four years; and a sort of greatest hits collection of the "road" CD experiments the band sells to devotees at concerts.

Guitarist Joey Burns and drummer John Convertino relocated from their

Tucson base to New Orleans to record *Algiers* with co-producer Craig Schumacher. The duo were revitalized by the city's culture and lore, but their music here remains rooted in the Southwest.

As with their last album, *Carried to Dust*, the band's sound is a swirl of influences, from surf and twang to Tex-Mex and 1950s jazz noir, all with accents of mariachi and Gypsy jazz thrown in. The duo are backed by a long list of collaborators old and new.

The album-opening "Epic" begins as an unassuming, soft-spoken lament before building into a powerful anthem, driven by long-time Calexico string man Paul Niehaus' trebly guitar riffs and shimmering chords.

"Splitter" layers distorted and crystal-clean guitar tracks with a driving drum line and horn section to create a proud

extra! EXTRA!



RICK ESTRIN AND THE NIGHTCATS, *One Wrong Turn* (Alligator)

When Nightcats leader/guitarist "Little Charlie" Baty handed the reins to singer/songwriter/harmonica player Rick Estrin, the durable quartet didn't miss a beat. In Kid Andersen they found a guitarist, engineer, and co-producer. He turns in a wince-worthy solo on "Calling All Fools" and takes the 'Cats surfing (in Baja?) on the infectious instrumental "The Legend Of Taco Cobbler." — **DF**



JIMBO MATHUS, *Blue Light* (Big Legal Mess Records)

Mississippi's Mathus returns with an EP stirring up a powerful potion of country, blues, and roots rock. The title track starts out as a weeping-in-a-beer lament before building into a gospel-tinged country anthem with rollicking pedal steel and guitar solos. — **MD**



ZOE MUTH AND THE LOST HIGH ROLLERS, *Old Gold* (Signature Sounds)

Muth sings like a lost, lamented Carter sister while guitar and pedal steel player Dan Harmonson is her instrumental match. Muth's decidedly un-Joplin-esque take on "Get It While You Can" is an inspired highlight on a solidly fine album. — **RA**



GERALD ALBRIGHT AND NORMAN BROWN, *24/7* (Concord Music)

When someone tells you the category known as Smooth Jazz can't be soulful, this is a record to spin. Brown's a skillful and stylish guitarist, influenced by the likes of George Benson. Albright's saxophone

isn't afraid to be pretty or to growl. Excellent songs and great playing show why this one's a huge chart hit. — **JH**



STEVE BAUGHMAN, *The Power of Claw* (Oak Leaf)

This instructional DVD, transposing the haunting claw-hammer banjo style to guitar, covers picking patterns, tunings, and techniques, from the basic "bum-ditty" strum to funk rhythms and "pyro-picking." Baughman's approach is laid back, complete, and, best of all, easy to follow. Tunes (with tablature) include "Old Joe Clark," "Cluck Old Hen," "Cripple Creek," and "Shady Grove." — **DF**



ARCHIE POWELL AND THE EXPORTS, *Great Ideas in Action* (Good Land Records)

Stompin' rock and roll and clever lyrics meet at the crossroads that is Powell and the Exports. There are no brilliant solos, but plenty of blistering riffs and chords from Powell's guitar. The songs are about everything from finding a job to abusing drugs to life angst on the smoking title cut. — **JH**



MARION JAMES, *Northside Soul* (EllerSoul)

Known for her 1966 Excellence hit "That's My Man" and leading a touring band circa '63 that sported Jimi Hendrix, this

church-rooted, bluesy soul singer follows last year's *Essence* with an inspired set of originals and covers (Ray Charles, Willie Dixon, Junior Parker). Cut in Richmond, Virginia, it features Ivan Appelrouth's B. B.-inflected guitar and producer Tod Ellsworth's lowdown bass. — **DF**



GIANT SAND, *Tucson* (Fire Records)

Howe Gelb's vision continues to grow. He leads his Giant Sand collective through a rock opera road trip, creating a dusty masterpiece aswirl with guitar sounds, voices, and layers of instruments on the path to redemption. — **MD**



ROLAND NIPP, *All We Desire* (Self-distributed)

Nipp is a fine guitarist who handles all the instruments on his releases, and here we get 14 cuts of soulful guitar that walks a line between soul, jazz, and rock. His melodies are sweet and pure, but he's not afraid to let it rip wide open on cuts like "Love Sick Blues" and "Drag." — **JH**



PETE SEEGER, *The Complete Bowdoin College Concert, 1960* (Smithsonian Folkways)

Blacklisted during the so-called Red Scare, Seeger took his mix of bluegrass, world music, and pre-folk-rock ("Bells Of Rhymney," which the Byrds later recorded) to colleges,

town halls, anywhere he could. He sneaks a few political digs into this nearly two-hour show (presented in pristine audio), along with some great banjo frailing and a mini Leadbelly lesson on 12-string guitar. — **DF**



BARBARA CARR, *Keep the Fire Burning* (Catfood Records)

Singer Carr is a deep-voiced modern-day Della Reese with a funky twist. "Hanging On By A Thread" has axman Johnny McGhee bringing Southern rock licks to a soul party thrown by producer Johnny Rawls, himself an old-school R&B guitarist who makes sure McGhee isn't overshadowed by the horn section. — **RA**



THE STEEPWATER BAND, *Clava* (Self-distributed)

Blending classic rock with traditional blues, Chicago's Steepwater trio is back with a guitar-powered fusion of psychedelia and heavy rock. Jeff Massey's distorted lead guitar hits you in the gut from the first note through the last. — **MD**



CHRIS BARBER, *Memories of My Trip* (Proper American)

This pioneering British trombonist is really where the blues revival began. He's probably the only musician whose 80th birthday double-CD tribute can span 52 years, encompass Dixieland, skiffle,

and blues, and boast jams with Muddy Waters, Eric Clapton, Lonnie Donegan, Alexis Korner, Mark Knopfler, Jeff Healey, Rory Gallagher, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Van Morrison, and Keith Emerson. — **DF**



CAILYN, *Four Pieces* (Self-distributed)

This Wisconsin guitarist has come up with another gem of a project. The instrumental collection takes off from her blues and glam rock foundation and gives Satriani and Howe something to worry about in ELP-type art rock originals like "Fantasia" and a gripping "Noc-turne," which feature her near flawless touch and tone. — **RA**



WES MONTGOMERY, *The Very Best of Wes Montgomery* (Concord Music)

Yes, it takes a lot of guts to title the record the "Very Best." But this 11-song set features some stellar tracks from Montgomery's three years on the Riverside label. At least everyone can agree this is a fine place to start if you aren't familiar with this jazz guitar legend. — **JH**



MIKE MCPAD-DEN, *If You Like Metallica...* (Backbeat Books)

With a narrative about things related to the band, this book address the influence of other guitar players and acts ranging from Led Zeppelin to Bob Seger, followed by chapters on bands and various pop-culture elements that have been influenced by Hetfield, Hammett, and company. Movies, books, and cultural allusions pepper the text. — **ECS**