

e2K
If Not Now

Topic TSCD538 (53m)

e2K's latest offering builds on their previous album, *Shift*, and cements their position as contenders for the title of 'most interesting band in England.'

Vocalist Kellie While continues to blossom and the subtlety of her phrasing and timbre are at perfect ease with the typically complex rhythms. Jon Moore has penned some excellent songs, notably the acutely apposite *Dealing with History*, the allegorical *Common Ground* and delightful *A Lullaby for Everyone*. Neil Yates' brass and whistle arrangements are a constant joy and Kwame Yeboah's production skills add icing to an excellent and consistently satisfying album.

The only downside on the e2K horizon, where everyone on the album is on top form, is to be gleaned from the title. How long can so many talented performers keep ploughing this eminently fertile furrow before they receive the acclaim that they deserve? For e2K the question becomes *If Not Now* - when? Be sure to enjoy the band and this album, in particular, while you can.

Bill Bellamy

DANÚ
The Road Less Traveled

Shanachie SH 78057 (51m)

THIS is Danú's fourth album, and the first with new singer Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh. Ciarán O'Geallbhain was always going to be a very hard act to follow; yet she seems to have fitted into the band perfectly - her low, husky voice sounding reminiscent of the younger Dolores Keane. She also adds a strong Kerry influence, both with songs like *Beannacht o Ri na h-Aoine* and with the swinging polka set which closes the album, on which she plays flute.

Dónal Clancy rejoins on guitar, replacing Noel Ryan, while fiddler Oisín McAuley really makes his mark on this album with a strong Donegal emphasis in some of the tune sets. For a band that have been through quite a lot of personnel changes, they sound exceptionally tight, and, while there's plenty of drive in the music, they remain very subtle in their approach, with lots of interplay between the different instrumental combinations.

This CD should add to their reputation as one of the foremost traditional bands in Ireland.
Nick Passmore

CRUCIBLE
Changeling

Wild Goose WGS315CD (49m)

THREE members of youthful ceilidh band Hekety take time out to join in vocal and instrumental harmony with a friend from Jabadaw in this open-minded Sheffield-based collaboration. And one asks oneself if there's anything that these talented young folk can't turn their hand to. Their playing field is, broadly speaking, the English tradition, but Richard and Jess Arrowsmith, Helena Reynolds and Gavin Davenport look to wide horizons.

The subtlest melodeon overlaying a deep five-string viola or octave fiddle, with a border-pipe drone, lends an early-music feel to much of the instrumental work, while vocally they'll willingly apply themselves to four-part, shape-note harmony. Between these extents of consort and quire, the two girls collaborate effectively on vocals and rhythmic strings on *The Devil and the Farmer's Wife*, while the male contingent contributes an understated reading of *Poor Man's Labours*.

The title track is a curious self-composed song on the theme of the fairy child, rendered as an unaccompanied solo by Jess - a bold statement that epitomises the group's eagerness to explore all avenues open to them (with the day-job security of playing for dances!), an appetite for adventure that adds that vital edge to a very listenable album.

Mike Greenwood

BILL JONES
Two Year Winter

Brick Wall BRICK 005CD (43m)

OBSERVING an artist mature and develop is a fascinating process and I've been watching (and listening to) Bill Jones, both on record and live, since she launched herself on to the British folk scene, a few years ago. That she has matured and developed is beyond question. Previous albums, while very satisfying, have always just fallen short of their full potential, but not so, this time. *Two Year Winter* cracks those intangible shortcomings. It's the album she has been trying to make for a while and she has finally found the confidence to do it.

Accompanying herself variously on piano, accordion and whistles, Bill has chosen a varied selection of songs, both from the tradition (the jaunty *The Holland Mistress* being among the stand-out tracks) and from modern day writers, like American Anne Hills, who provides the sombre title track, as well as *Lost Chances*. Other highlights include Pete Morton's *The Two Brothers* and her own poignant tribute to Victorian heroine Grace Darling.

Bill has assembled a bunch of accomplished musicians to back her and, while all deserve mention, particularly impressive are guitarist David Wood and Paul Jayasinha, who contributes very tasty cello and flugelhorn.

This album is, without doubt, her best yet.

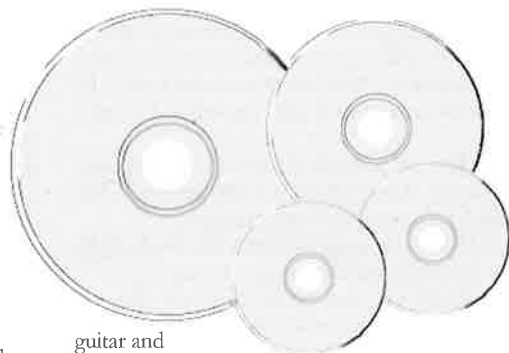
Keith Hudson

MOLLY ANDREWS
Blue Morning Glory

Pneumuse (37m)

MOLLY Andrews of West Virginia delivers a pleasing debut album. Especially pleasing to those who like the Appalachian ballads sung in the clear, straightforward style of those regions.

She has obviously listened to many of the old singers, whose echoes are to be heard throughout. But she doesn't try to sound like an old-timer - her voice is a fresh and youthful one. It's a matter of style, the manner of throwing the voice out, sometimes with a slight catch or upwards flick for decoration. She is nifty on



guitar and autoharp too.

Titles like *One Morning in May*, *Single Girl* and *Bright Morning Stars* show the traditional elements in the programme, while two songs by Hazel Dickens and two of her own show that she knows her branches as well as her roots. A good group of guest musicians do back up on several tracks.

It's a very satisfying album. I've enjoyed it immensely. I'm told that she has sung in Llantrisant and Cardiff. Alas, I missed both, but I'll be there next time.

Roy Harris

DAVE ARTHUR with PETE COOPER & CHRIS MORETON

Return Journey

Wild Goose WGS313CD (59m)

FOR probably thirty years now, banjo-accordion-guitar-player, folklorist and tale-teller, Dave Arthur has ducked, weaved and turned up just when one least expects. Aided by fiddler Pete Cooper and guitar-picker Chris Moreton, he's surfaced again with a classic opus. *Return Journey* is a recording that traces the crossing and recrossing of the Atlantic by a wide canon of generic folk tunes and lyrical themes.

Hardly a previously unexplored theme, you may suggest - but this isn't just a hook on which to hang a miscellany of British and American string-band tunes. Here's genuine commitment to an academic study which, fortunately for the listener, just happens to turn out as well a collection of such music as you would wish to hear. The musicianship is faultless. Cooper's pedigree is impeccable, while Usk-based Moreton's guitar skills are well-known and he's frequently handed the lead.

As a bonus, the sequence of tracks really stimulates the old grey-matter. Just listen to the opening metamorphosis from *Shepherd's Hey* into the *Fairy Dance*, and all manner of intriguing possibilities flood into view. And was *Michael Turner's Waltz* (aka *When He Cometh*, by American evangelists Root & Cushing) written by Mozart? Here's a transatlantic treat for head and feet.

Mike Greenwood

COLIN REID
Swim

Topic TSCD541 (42m)

BELFAST guitarist Reid's third album consists entirely of his own compositions. His highly