

biologically themed song collection.

LIVE AT BLUE ROCK is leavened by a trio of Fred Eaglesmith songs: *Your Sister Cried* opens the disc. Later and early in the morning outside a mission, a demented man calls out an old lover's name in *Cigarette Machine*, and finally there's *The Rocket* which Fred rarely performs. The melancholic latter title is narrated by an up-in-years decorated WWI veteran while paying his weekly visit to the local train station. It was there that, four decades ago that this boy, who '...looked so good in that brand new soldier's uniform...' left home, never to return. Undertaking a journey deep into her recorded back pages, LIVE AT BLUE ROCK is tantamount to an in-concert greatest hits collection. The late Steam Train Maury lives to ride the rails again in *Last Of The Hobo Kings*. Having served fifteen years on death row Karla Faye Tucker was executed and she recalls her raw deal life in *Karla Faye*, while the living hell of being an alcoholic permeates *I Drink*. The ancestrally Southern *Sugar Cane*, co-written with Catie Curtis, is given an airing, and *Drag Queens In Limousines*—the title song of Gauthier's 1999 sophomore album—features '...dreamers with big dreams.' Penned as a tribute to the late Dave Carter, LIVE AT BLUE ROCK closes with *Wheel Inside The Wheel*, and just when you thought the eleven listed songs are all you get, a hidden rendition of *Mercy Now* surfaces; possibly studio recorded, since a keyboard, drum kit and a girlie chorus are featured. **Arthur Wood**

www.marygauthier.com

Old Crow Medicine Show CARRY ME BACK

Decca Records

★★★★★

Starting out as buskers, this band is at the top end of the artistic ladder



I don't care whether you download it or go to your local shop, just buy it! The first two tracks take off at a rip-roaring pace as a melange of fiddles, banjos, guitars and joyous vocals evoke a Southern States feel that plonks you into the middle of Civil War Virginia or Carolina. *Carry Me Back To Virginia* and *We Don't Grow Tobacco* have to be the best opening songs I have heard in a long time. It seems that we reviewers are buried in a landslide of roots music at the moment with banjos on every track. It is

so refreshing to listen to a record that uses that much maligned instrument properly—always there, but used to complement the quality of the song, not just thrown into the mix.

There is joyfulness to this band as, for me, they finally capture the enthusiasm and energy portrayed in their stage shows. Their last album was produced with the involvement of Dave Rawlings, but this time they have employed Ted Hutt who has worked with Jesse Malin, The Dropkick Murphy's and The Gaslight Anthem, amongst many others. For me, Ted has used that mixture of experience to produce this record. It is not all taken at 100mph. The gorgeously bittersweet *Levi* tells the tale of the aforementioned character who served and died in an army '...ten thousand miles from a southern town...'—as fine a testament to the futility of today's wars as you will hear. But with tracks titled *Bootleggers Boy*, *Mississippi Saturday Night* and *Sewanee Mountain Catfight*, there is no explanation needed as to where this band's heart lies. I could go on trying to persuade you to get the album, but I won't. Just buy it! **John Jobling**

www.facebook.com/OldCrowMedicineShow

Lynn Miles BLACK FLOWERS VOL. 3

★★★★☆

Lynn Miles still hasn't dropped the ball with yet another stunning volume release



Lynn launched her BLACK FLOWERS series of redux albums during the second half of 2008, with the intention of releasing further volumes every six months. VOL. 2 dutifully surfaced early the following year, and then, as it does, I guess life got in Lynn's way. Miles' stated aim with this series was to bring to the public domain the six hundred songs she has authored, by way of solo voice, guitar (acoustic and electric), harmonica and piano, driven 'back to basics' recordings.

VOL. 3 like its predecessors features ten compositions, although on this occasion the gold dust arrives in the form of a quartet of previously unrecorded Miles originals, and, I'd hazard, a fifth tune that is less familiar to even serious followers of her music. I clearly recall hearing Lynn Miles for the first time following a couple of Canada

only releases—Boston based imprint Rounder/Philo launched her SLIGHTLY HAUNTED nationally and internationally. If it's possible to be addicted in a single hearing, that's how hard I fell for Miles music and voice sixteen years ago, and in the years since, this accomplished songwriter has never once dropped the ball. That's not how a recording career usually works. Her brand of lyrical melancholy, wed to hook-laden melodies that you find yourself unconsciously humming, is simply in a class all of its own.

Memories of that 1996 first hearing came flooding back with VOL. 3 opener, the resolute *I'm Still Here*. *The One You're Waiting For* from NIGHT IN A STRANGE TOWN (1998) follows, and was recorded during Miles' almost four year sojourn in Los Angeles. I harbour a sneaking affection for fellow Canuck Jane Siberry's 1989 composition *Hockey*. I alluded to Lynn's possible fifth new tune earlier, and from her sophomore CHALK THIS ONE UP TO THE MOON (1991) she reprises the irreverent *Hockey Night In Canada*. The picturesque lines: 'There's a blue glow in every window, and I am walking home alone again in the freshly fallen, frozen snow' has been a video that I have played over and over in my head for years. I guess there's a certain irony when I relate that Lynn's father was a hockey coach! Completing the familiar fare on this go round, from Lynn's twenty-first millennium award winning, major label releases there is one song each, namely—*Sweet And Tender Heart*, *Undertow* and *Fearless Heart*.

Sprinkled among the foregoing tunes is the 'gold dust' I mentioned earlier. At the outset of the redemptive prayer *Drunks And Fools*, the despairing, alcohol-fuelled narrator reflects: 'I fought the battle, I lost the war. Now I'm adding up the cost.' Lynn doesn't often rock, so just let's say that the self-explanatory title *All Bitter Never Sweet* is one of her more robust creations, while the narrator of the ensuing, ballad-paced *Only Way Out* has resolved that it's time to put her life in order—'You might end up being black and blue, at least you'll know what's false and true.' It's purely a personal opinion, but on VOL. 3 Lynn has reserved the best for last. *Look Up* is based upon the premise of 'looking up' or 'looking down' depending on your state of mind. From simplicity, Lynn Miles has conjured a gem.

Arthur Wood

www.lynnmilesmusic.com