

ALBUMS

Edited by Michael Paoletta

POP

★ JOE BONAMASSA

So, It's Like That

PRODUCER: Clif Magness

Medalist Entertainment 60101

The fact that blues-rock guitarist Joe Bonamassa is hitting the road this month with B.B. King is a testament to this guy's old-school, old-soul virtuosity. There's so much passion and sweat slung about his sophomore outing, *So, It's Like That*, that just listening to it feels like an interactive outing. The 25-year-old plays a grimacing lead guitar and delivers gruff vocals at full volume, and he's not afraid to get down and dirty on such Southern rock paean as "Lie #1" and "Sick in Love." But Bonamassa also shows an appreciation for the nuances of emotion in the hitworthy "My Mistake" and first single "Unbroken," both melodic triumphs that tough guys can sing along with. Just in case his authenticity still isn't stamped in capital letters, the first 25,000 copies of the album contain a bonus DVD with two hours of live footage. Together, it's enough to send smoke signals from your home stereo: This is no regular Joe.—**CT**

★ VARIOUS ARTISTS

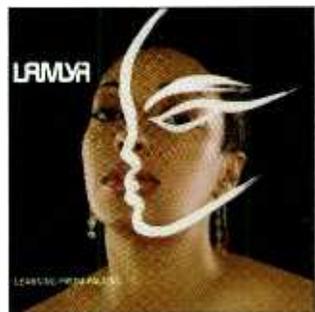
Total Lee! The Songs of Lee Hazlewood

PRODUCERS: various

Astralwerks 12464

Over the past few years, a younger generation of musicians has embraced Lee Hazlewood's playfully sophisticated music. It started in 1999, when Sonic Youth's Steve Shelley began reissuing classic Hazlewood LPs on his Smells Like Records label. Now Astralwerks' *Total Lee!* pays tribute to the man who launched the careers of Duane Eddy and Nancy Sinatra. Participants range from the expected (Lambchop, Calexico, Johnny Dowd) to the surprising (Kid Loco, Saint Etienne). Though nobody had the guts to tackle the classic Hazlewood/Sinatra "These Boots Are Made for Walking," the album sports several fruitful pairings. Evan Dando and Sabrina Brooke get drunk on "Summer Wine," while Pulp's Jarvis

S P O T L I G H T S



LAMYA

Learning From Falling

PRODUCERS: various

J Records 80813-20032

J Records founder Clive Davis and his key A&R man, Peter Edge, have a knack for discovering tomorrow's superstar divas today. Lamya is the duo's latest discovery, and on her debut, *Learning From Falling*, she exudes a confidence that is not studied or learned, but simply is. Ditto for her musical vision, which is not easy to pigeonhole. Is it hip-hop? Alt-rock? What about folk, world music, soul, or dance/electronic? *Learning From Falling* is all this and more. Over this rhythmically rich foundation, Lamya—who penned all the poetic lyrics (she has a way with words, trust)—sings of strong, secure men ("Empires"), internal hate ("Black Mona Lisa"), unrequited love ("Never Enough"), and the game of life (title track). Throughout, she is deftly assisted by a handful of savvy producers, including Nellee Hooper, David Kahne, and Soulshock and Karlin. Sensual, mysterious, and provocative, *Learning From Falling* shines brightly.—**MP**

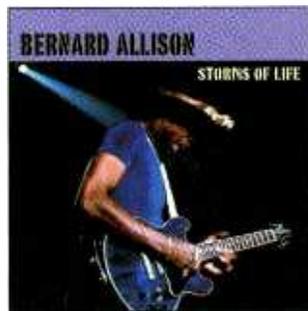
BERNARD ALLISON

Storms of Life

PRODUCER: David Z.

Tone Cool 751 135

Bernard Allison's debut album for Tone Cool, 2000's *Across the Water*, was a U.S. breakout release for the talented guitarist. With *Storms of Life*, Allison shows that the powerhouse blues/rock sound that characterized its predecessor is an integral part of his repertoire. "Down South" and "Mean Town Blues" rock with a fierce intensity. Allison also demonstrates a growing versatility as a songwriter/player. "I Wanna Drive



You Home" is a very cool slice of electrified country blues, and the instrumentals "Slip Slidin'" and "Speed Slide" showcase Allison's impressive slide guitar chops. "Reaching Out" is a terrific, jazzy song, coming from a musical mindset Allison should explore further. Also check out the Jimmy Reed vibe and the nasty guitar sound on "Fist Full of Dirt." Allison is in top form; expect career-defining albums from him for the rest of the decade.—**PVV**



ALLISON MOORER

Miss Fortune

PRODUCERS: R.S. Field, Doyle Primm

Universal South 088 170 295

With this, her third album, the Nashville resident Allison Moorer will continue to confound—and perhaps amaze—those on Music Row (see story, page 9). An adventurous singer/songwriter just like her sister Shelby Lynne, the vocally gifted Moorer doesn't shy away from bucking country tradition. In fact, she seems to revel in it. Consider this: Moorer tapped another Nashville misfit, R.S. Field, to coproduce the exquisite *Miss Fortune* with her husband, Doyle Primm. The set opens with tear-soaked, radio-ready pop gems "Tumbling Down" and "Cold in California." "Let Go" and "Can't Get There From Here" recall the artist's neo-traditionalist country roots, while "Going Down" is Rolling Stones blues. On the orchestral "Steal the Sun," Moorer enters the blue-eyed soul territory of Dusty Springfield. *Miss Fortune* is yours for the taking—just remember to keep an open mind.—**MP**

Porter does a bit of mood hopping, moving evenly from the ebullient pop-rock of "If Love Were an Airplane" to a voice cracking with bitterness on the discordant "Everything But Sorry." Highlights also include the Mediterranean tang of "Big Yellow Pine," with guest Ian Anderson of Jethro Tull on bamboo flute and producer Emanuel Kiriakou on bouzouki.—**KIT**

THE WAIFS

Sink or Swim

PRODUCERS: the Waifs

Jarrah 21506

Unflinchingly honest and musically exploratory, this Australian trio's U.S. debut is an eclectic pop mixture delving into the ups and downs of relationships. At times mellow and introspective—as on the slow-moving "Danger" (about a couple who "missed the signs" in its relationship)—the project can also be exuberant (witness "Without You," a freewheeling tune that tells of a woman who finds freedom after a much-needed break-up). "The Haircut" is a melancholy account of how unhealthy expectations can tear two people apart; it's accompanied by beautiful guitar and string work. Though heavily relying on the vocals of sisters Donna and Vikki Simpson, guitarist Joshua Cunningham chimes in on the charming "Love Serenade" and on the group's autobiographical-sounding "A Brief History . . ." The album ends with the hopeful title track that poses these words to listeners: "Water's fine from the edge/But how you gonna know if you don't get wet?"—**JK**

R&B/HIP-HOP

► TRICK DADDY

Thug Holiday

PRODUCERS: various

Slip-N-Slide/Atlantic 83556

Even a thug has to mature, and that's the idea behind Trick Daddy's fifth set, *Thug Holiday*. The Miami-based MC offers a balanced set that includes fair shares of both indulgent party tracks and touching tales of ghetto life. The title track is a prime example of the latter. Featuring former Xscape singer LaTocha Scott, "Thug Holiday" is a mournful piano-driven track that shows Trick's sensitive side as he not

(Continued on page 20)

Cocker pairs with Richard Hawley to wrap a sinister veil around "The Cheat." Calvin Johnson's dusty baritone gives Hazlewood a run for his money on "Sand," and the Webb Brothers put a psychedelic spin on "Some Velvet Morning." Worth the price alone are Hazlewood's liner notes responding to the songs as he hears them again, for the first time.—**JDF**

WILLY PORTER

Willy Porter

PRODUCER: Emanuel Kiriakou

Six Degrees 657036 1073

Willy Porter's greatest songwriting attribute lies in his quietly reverberating stories. On his fourth disc (his second for Six Degrees), rather than ply emotional immediacy, Porter draws his listeners in slowly with painstakingly drawn character portraits. In

"Unconditional," he details a woman "holding her child on her bended knee," professing unwavering devotion to the flaws he'll likely develop. The singer/songwriter often accentuates such well-rendered tales with a spitfire-percussive acoustic guitar strumming and fiery color-chord picking, most notable here on "Breathe."

V I T A L R E I S S U E S

VARIOUS ARTISTS

The Acoustic Folk Box

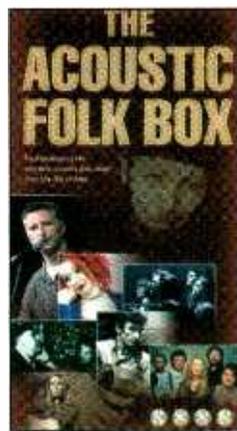
COMPILATION PRODUCER: David Suff

ORIGINAL PRODUCERS: various

Topic 4001

Subtitled "Four decades of the very best acoustic folk music from the British Isles," this four-CD, 85-track boxed set is indeed that, with credit due to the venerable U.K. indie label Topic, home to many of the featured artists. The all-encompassing compilation—one decade per disc—informatively documents the folk-music revival that began in the mid-'50s with seminal British "skiffle" artist Lonnie Donegan's lively reading of the American folk staple "Jack O'Dia-

monds"—a top 20 U.K. hit in 1958 that helped usher in the hugely influential '60s British folk scene. The rest of the first disc is simply one revelation after another, featuring such widely recognized legends as Ewan MacColl, the Dubliners, Bert Jansch, John Renbourn, Sandy Denny, and the Incredible String Band. Lesser-known in the U.S., perhaps, but equally noteworthy are family group the Watsons and solo artist Martin Carthy, who married Norma Waterson (their daughter, Eliza Carthy, carries on the tradition and closes the set with her 1998 Topic track "10,000 Miles"). Also represented is Anne Briggs, whose compelling a cappella



"She Moves Through the Fair" verifies her predominant position in the pantheon of British female folk artists. As the photograph-laden, info-packed 56-page booklet points out, the '70s brought a similar introversion to the lyrics of British folk to those of the American singer/songwriters who emerged from the corresponding stateside folk scene and also showed resurgent interest in English country-dance music. Among the represented names from this time that resonate with U.S. audiences are Pentangle, Maddy Prior, and the Bothy Band; the '80s disc evokes the updated traditionalism of the period as manifested by the storied likes of

the Battlefield Band, Brass Monkey, Richard Thompson, Patrick Street, Altan, June Tabor, and the "rogue folk" English Country Blues Band. Emerging in the '90s was a new generation of singer/songwriters exemplified by Billy Bragg, Kate Rusby, and Eliza Carthy, along with such modernized groove-oriented dance music practitioners as Scottish "roots" band Shooegenifty. English folk music, again like its U.S. counterpart, had managed to successfully transcend its deep roots and continue into the next century in robust health, as evidenced so amply in this boxed set. Distributed in the U.S. by City Hall Records.—**JB**

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Waddell. SPOTLIGHT: Releases deemed by the review editors to deserve special attention on the basis of musical merit and/or Billboard chart potential. VITAL REISSUES: Rereleased albums of special artistic, archival, and commercial interest, and outstanding collections of works by one or more artists. PICKS (►): New releases predicted to hit the top half of the chart in the corresponding format. CRITICS' CHOICES (★): New releases, regardless of chart potential, highly recommended because of their musical merit. MUSIC TO MY EARS (♫): New releases deemed Picks that were featured in the Music to My Ears column as being among the most significant records of the year. All albums commercially available in the U.S. are eligible. Send review copies to Michael Paoletta (Billboard, 770 Broadway, 6th floor, New York, N.Y. 10003) or to the writers in the appropriate bureaus.