

MAVERICK

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Maverick celebrates issue 100

*featuring
Lady Antebellum*

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fine band at the recent Didmarton Bluegrass Festival, where they featured many of these songs during their two sets. The band comprises Peter Rowan, guitar; Jody Stecher, mandolin; Keith Little, banjo and Paul Knight, bass. Peter Rowan has always been a fine song smith and he is responsible for 11 of the songs, the exceptions being *Catfish Blues* arranged by Jody Stecher and Carter Stanley's gospel song *Let Me Walk Lord By Your Side*. There is a deep underlying sense of spirituality in many of the other tracks which include *Jailer Jailer*, *The Raven*, *The Night Prayer* and two other fine gospel songs *Turn The Other Cheek* and *God's Own Child* where Del McCoury and Ricky Skaggs add their considerable weight. This is an album which has grown on me every time I've played it, the lyrics are extremely sensitive and the musicianship faultless. Whilst I admit that Peter Rowan's vocals might not be quite so strong as when I first heard him in 1966 it is a superb product which gets my hearty recommendation to lovers of bluegrass. **DB**
<http://www.peter-rowan.com/>

**Ralph McTell
SOMEWHERE
DOWN THE
ROAD**

Leola Music
TPGD31
★★★★

Ralph McTell not as pedestrian as some would have us believe



Ralph is obviously as proud of London as any man can be (with the possible exception of Peter Ackroyd) and in his opening track sums up his love of the city with the light-hearted *London Apprentice*. By adding Chris Parkinson on accordion, memories are conjured of a bygone era as opposed to the stark realities of life conveyed in 'that' more famous London ballad. Evoking memories of early recordings, Ralph showed how creative he could be capturing instrumentally his love of rag-time guitar picking, featured in the *Reverend Thunder (Blind Faith)*. Ralph buoyantly proves he is no slouch when it comes to his own digital dexterity, whilst the song *Around The Wild Cape Horn* with its allusions of an American based Irish Rover will undoubtedly prove popular with those looking for a more perceptive side to his songwriting talents. Now, I know the term 'pedestrian' has been levelled accusingly at McTell's music presentation (wrongly in my opinion) but if indeed that is a characteristic it has run throughout his recordings but to me personally proves the point that often less is more. An example of this is the delightful *Girl On The Jersey Ferry* where the gentle string arrangement by Gareth Churcher and the Kernow String Quartet create a laid-back, summer strolling by the river effect. **SOMEWHERE DOWN THE ROAD** is a welcome return after a ten year sabbatical from studio recordings and with fourteen tracks to choose from there should be something for everyone. **PF**
www.ralphmctell.co.uk

**Randy Houser
THEY CALL
ME CADILLAC**

Hump Head
Records HUMP093
★★★★
Too much heavy rock and not enough genuine country for these ears



A few years go I'd have probably eagerly embraced this latest album by Randy Houser, but to be brutally honest it is so formulaic I found it difficult to really enjoy the whole eleven tracks. The Mississippi-born singer-songwriter proclaims himself as a purveyor of 'real country music' and I'm sure he really believes that, but the fact is that at least half of the tracks on his album are so heavily-rock inflected that they're as about as close to genuine down-home country music as the pop-inflected warblings of Carrie Underwood. There's a misconception in Nashville that if you weave pedal steel and lyrics about lonesome, alcohol and the joys of country living in with a throbbing bass, screeching electric guitars, pounding drums and a gutsy Southern twang that you're making 'real country music'. Sorry! But you're misleading yourself—but not me.

Too many of the songs here lack a memorable tune. *Addicted* a five-minute dirge is typical. Houser pours out his heart and soul, but the whole bombast is just too much to take even with the added background vocals of Lee Ann Womack which are totally lost in the overbearing chorus. When he does keep to 'real country music' then Randy Houser is mighty good. *A Man Like Me* is excellent with the pedal steel and honky-tonk piano blending perfectly with emotional lyrics. That is followed by the plaintive *Will I Always Be This Way*, again Eddie Long's pedal steel is to the fore on a powerful straight country tune. But then you have out-and-out rockers like *Whistlin' Dixie* and *Lowdown and Lonesome* which are nothing more than generic and not particular good at that. Though I can imagine many will embrace those tracks, feet-tapping and head bobbing. He repents beautifully though with the closing *Lead Me Home* a simple but effective gospel song with just his acoustic guitar for accompaniment—now that is real country music. Having sat through similar albums by the likes of Trace Adkins, Toby Keith, Randy Rogers Band, Keith Urban, etc, maybe I've been a little harsh on Randy Houser, but I just wish that these Nashville acts would try and be original, be totally honest and keep to their proclamation that they are actually singing country music and not hard rock music for the masses. And of course when that happen, pigs just might fly across that good ole Nashville skyline. **AC**
www.randyhouser.com

**Randy Rogers
Band
BURNING THE
DAY**

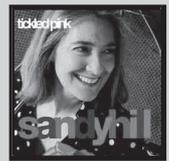
Hump Head
Records HUMP086
★★★★
Country-rock



**Sandy Hill
TICKLED PINK**

Gatestone Media
★★★★★

Delightful debut album from Sandy Hill—skilled production, superb musicianship and enchanting mix of material showcases Sandy's vocal charm perfectly



This is one of those rare albums that makes you smile, relax and feel warm and good from the first to the 11th track! Sandy's soft and affecting delivery and her sympathetic interpretation is a joy. The sheer quality of the vocal and instrumental arrangements, the magnificent musicianship and vocal support plus the strong production values (from Sam Brown) are key and should guarantee Sandy success. The original and skilful treatment of a delightful yet eclectic mix of songs—from folk to retro-boogie style through French ballad to pure pop and the light-hearted trad-jazzy title track—make for very happy listening.

With Jools Holland featuring on piano, Herbie Flowers on bass and tuba, Richard Durrant playing a sublime acoustic guitar and mandolin plus, Sam's dad Joe Brown on banjo. Pete Brown features on lap steel guitar and mandola as well as Sam Brown herself on accordion, ukulele and piano, this album was sure to be worth hearing. With vocal support from Steve Balsamo, Aitch McRobbie and others of their calibre is impressive too. Favourite tracks are *It's All Over* (great guitar work from Pete Brown) as well as Sam Brown's original retro-style and very powerful new composition *Walk Right Back* (with Jools Holland giving it his all on piano) plus *Slipping Through My Fingers* where Sam Brown's original vocal arrangement is perfect. What sets this album apart is the happy blend of songs, all superbly arranged and performed with such feeling.

Sandy has admitted that Sam Brown shares the credit for the inspired production work. In fact, as Eric Clapton recently observed, the sheer range of Sam's talents is one of UK music's best kept secrets. She is not only a fine (and multi-platinum) singer who has worked with everyone from T-Rex, Pink Floyd, and B B King, but she is a talented multi-instrumentalist, prolific songwriter (including for Tom Jones and Ray Charles), mentor plus a highly capable record producer too.

So **TICKLED PINK** is a triumph for Sandy Hill—but for Sam Brown also. Hopefully this album will help each of them achieve the wider recognition they so clearly deserve. **ND-R**
www.sandyhill.co.uk/

with more than enough country to appeal to mainstream listeners and enough edge to reel in the Americana fans

This Texas five-piece are possibly too edgy for Nashville's country mainstream, but following a trio of indie releases on small Texas labels, they joined Mercury-Nashville some five years ago and released *IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME* and *RANDY ROGERS BAND*, both produced by Radney Foster. Neither album produced any radio-friendly singles, so they were moved over to sister label MCA-Nashville and Paul Worley (Martina McBride, Dixie Chicks, etc) was brought in to sprinkle some gold dust on this latest album. Well, I have to say that despite the band's edgy rock-based sound, it's actually more country than so-called country acts like Toby Keith, Trace Adkins and Randy Houser.

The band is composed of Randy Rogers (lead vocals), Geoffrey Hill (guitar), Jon Richardson (bass), Brady Black (fiddle), and Les Lawless (drums). They've actually been allowed to play on their recordings which immediately gives the band a sound of their own, although there is some additional session players, including Tim Lauer (keyboards), Bruce Bouton (steel), Eric Borash (electric guitar) and vocal sweetening courtesy of Shelly Fairchild and Brian Keane. Yes it's heavy in the beat department, but the lead electric guitar is reined in, the bass is solid but never overbearing and the vocals are sweeter, closer to the Eagles and Poco than

southern twang. Most songs are band originals, some co-written with the likes of Bruce Robison, Dean Dillon and Sean McConnell. The Radney Foster influence is very much apparent on songs like *Missing You is More Than I Can Do* and *Damn The Rain*. The latter Foster co-wrote with Canadian Gordie Sampson and is a stunning mid-tempo number with a heady chorus that hooks you in. Album opener *Interstate* gives a good indication of what to expect, a well-written country-rock number, the kind of thing the Eagles used to specialise in. Yeah, this is good stuff. If country's gotta have a rock-edge to it I'd rather it was like this than the over the top, blaring guitars of Houser, Keith and Urban. **AC**
www.randyrogersband.com

**Rosehill
WHITE LINES
AND STARS**

Cypress Creek
Records
★★★★★
Truly a tune filled debut from this Texas twosome



Prior to forming Rosehill the Cypress, Texas bred duo of Blake Myers and Mitch McBain were members of Texas High Life, a five-piece that cut a couple of albums during the opening decade of the new millennium. Myers and McBain chose the name Rosehill because they grew up on Rosehill Road in Cypress—the town lies on Highway 290 some 20 miles north-west of Houston. Mainly recorded at Ronnie's Place and Omni Sound in Nashville,