

RECORD REVIEWS

Uncle Lucius The Light Boo Clap Records

THE LIGHT, FROM **Uncle Lucius**, IS an intelligent, thoughtful Americana-based album that doesn't quite stay within those semi-defined borders. From "Age of Reason:" "we're just scared of what we don't know, so we use pride like a debt we owe." From "Ouroboros:" "our brief time is a serpent swallowing its tail." From "Nothing to Save:" "just as ebb turns to flow, so the end becomes the beginning, what if there were nothing to save."

Being freed from its Nashville label — independent once again — pays off for the Austin band which had spent 10 years independently building its fan base. It's difficult — speculatively from this distance — to not think the opening, title song refers to the Nashville experience: "going through the motions / without knowing why / faking our emotions / trying hard not to try."

Much of the album has a sort of new gospel feel to it, not at all in the sense of church music, but in a modern spiritual sense: the light is within, believe in the light and hold on to yourself, slow down and be in the moment, don't pass judgment on others, etc.

In "Wheels in Motion," the band philosophizes that following the leader is the path of the true believer, but asks who else can measure except the one who owns the mirror.

Produced by **George Reiff**, who's worked with **Ray Wylie Hubbard**, **Band of Heathens**, **Shinyribs**, and others, *The Light* is well played, if occasionally busy. It's also nice that there's a lyric sheet, although, in the small script the designer used, it takes 25-year-old eyes to read them.

—TOM GEDDIE

Danny Schmidt Owls Live Once Records

Danny Schmidt's NEW OWLS IS filled with poetic words and often with poetic music, so much so that it feels like I'm listening to something important, something with Earth's gravity. The songs here remind me of loving an enigmatic woman.

In "Cries of Shadows," Schmidt sings of the morning of his childhood when his shadow would stretch before him like a playmate in the

grass, and he'd chase the shadow to catch it, and how in the noontime of life he would lie upon his shadow like drunken lovers in strange beds. He would wish to go away but she — his shadow — would follow, so he would hide beneath the shade tree. Then, in the afternoon, his shadow would chase him. In the eventual sunset of his life, he would sit and count the golden rings and his shadow would sit beside him and they would laugh at how they chased each other back and forth.

On "Faith Will Always Rise," he asks her if she would believe a man who showed her how to rise and stand, and hold her own forsaken hand. On "Cry on the Flowers," while the rest of life "just sighs and walks away," she stands at the mirror and cries until her tears eat the weeds. On "Wings of No Restraint, the laughter in her eyes was the kind that flies away" until she flies on her memories.

These briefest summaries don't do justice to the gentle words on the 11 songs on this, Schmidt's seventh album.

Schmidt adds guitar to his vocals. He's joined by producer **David Goodrich**, **Mike Meadows**, **Andrew Pressman**, **Lloyd Maines**, **Keith Gary**, and **Carrie Elkin**, **Daniel Thomas Phipps**, and **Ali Holder**.

—TOM GEDDIE

Little Brave Mythology Self-released

ON **Stephanie Macias'** TWO-DISC *Mythology*, she sings on "Honesty is a Vampire:" "I found a friend in honesty, though he smelled of blood I found him lovely . . . nothing holds a candle to his bleeding mouth." There's a bit of an edge to several of the songs, but they are more mainstream than you might think from the previous sentence. The songs have a really good, contemplative alt-pop feel that comes close to being irresistible.

Macias sings and plays all the instruments on disc one, accompanied by **Pat Manske** — the two of them as **Little Brave** — on various percussion instruments and church organ sampling. All of the songs are her on. On the seven disc one songs, Macias contemplates tempting the sheep into the wolf; debates solitude versus boredom, the dark cave of the heart, and more.

After I heard it only once, disc two of this finely put together package fell off the top of a stack of new CDs into a crack between my office wall and a full file cabinet. My hand won't fit into that space to pull it out. Besides, after listening to the first disc, I'm a little nervous about disturbing whatever's inside that spider-webbed crack. And the cabinet filled with my own indexed mythologies is hard to move.

Disc two is for the headphones, a two-month collection of sound clips of conversations, songs, crickets, tarot readings, and live shows that's, with the right attitude, perhaps more intriguing than disc one.

—TOM GEDDIE

Guy Forsyth Blues Band The Pleaser Small and Nimble Records

THE PLEASER FROM THE **Guy Forsyth Blues Band** is, on its own terms, a good listen that doesn't — or maybe just barely does — feel authentic. Or at least authentic enough. It's a sort of survey of blues clichés — or, if you prefer, stereotypes or truths of a certain condition of life — leaving an unanswered question: does the band bring anything new to the genre? Or, does he even need to bring anything new?

The Pleaser is well play by the versatile Forsyth (vocals, harmonica, guitar), **George Rarey** (lead guitar and vocals), **Naj Conklin** (bass and vocals), and **Mark Hays** (drums and vocals) and well produced by **Andre Zweers** and **Stuart Sullivan**.

Forsyth wrote or co-wrote all but one of the dozen songs, "Miniskirt." I assume there's some tongue in cheek in some of them.

I'd also like to hear more blues songs that *don't* follow that admittedly standard practice of repeating lines so many times; this is especially true in the earlier songs on this album. Not so much on the later songs which gain emotional strength from the lack of repetition.

The most enduring song among the dozen may be "Play to Lose" with its dark musical undercurrent and its implications, sharing the thoughts of a man who gave a woman "a nice dry place to stay" and let her ride in his car and bought her pretty things. Now he's angry at her for cheating.

—TOM GEDDIE

The Lonesome Band Running Alone Icehouse Music

RUNNING ALONE, THE FIRST STUDIO project from **The Lonesome Band**, is a solid collection of 11 songs from a good young bar band with its mix of country, rock, and funk. The opening "Agree to Disagree," with its country attitude, **Sam Whips Allison's** raspy vocals, and the not quite country-punk instrumental takes is a good introduction to the sound.

The best song, though, may be "Make 'em Dance," that tells a story of a young whose father called him wild, who left town and got himself a hillbilly band. The songs tend to deal with love and second chances, independence and rebellious attitudes, and even a bit of Texas jingoism.

The band is **Allison**, **Anthony Lucio**, **Kevin Rowe**, **Bill Payne**, **Alex McMahon**, **Chojo Jacques**, and **Larry Eisenberg**. Allison and Lucio, both with audio production degrees from the Art Institute of Austin, began as a duo after Lucio won his own challenge to write a hundred songs in one year.

—TOM GEDDIE

KNON

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89.3 FM Dallas / Ft Worth

AMERICANA TEXAS

By Tom Geddie

LOOKING FOR A THEME FOR the new **Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard** album, *Django and Jimmie*, I toyed with trying to sequence it song by song to make a sort of life, but my idea — *not life itself* — kinda fizzled out two-thirds of the way through. Or got too complicated to deal with. So let's just say this is Willie and Merle having some fun singing songs they like. Which they've been doing for a long time.

It's Nelson's sixth studio album for Legacy since he signed with the label in 2012.

The two legends, working with producer **Buddy Cannon**, mix in some nostalgia and even some seriousness. But not too much.

The opening, title song is, of course, a reach-way-back tribute to influential guitarist **Django Reinhardt** and folksinger **Jimmie Rodgers**, claiming that there "might not have been a Merle or a Willie" if not for those earlier legends.

On "It's All Going to Pot," with **Jamey Johnson** credited on bugle and flugelhorn, they claim a hundred dollar bill isn't going for whiskey because it's all going to pot. **Bobby Bare** guests on Haggard's "Missing Ol' Johnny Cash."

Haggard sings Nelson's reverent staple "Family Bible." Nelson sings Haggard's "Somewhere Between."

They sing the cliché about how they would have taken care of themselves if they'd known they were going to live this long. They sing about their "outlaw" images which are half truths, as much about marketing as they are about two men who like to play by their own rules.

Among the album's highlights though, is "Unfair Weather Friend," a contemplative song about a man who's alone where the whiskey "don't taste right." He's looking for somebody who's always there where they've always been, a true friend to help stave off the demons, someone to help it make sense.

Another is a nice version of **Bob Dylan's** "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right."

There are a whole busload of supporting musicians and backup singers including **Alison Krauss** (background vocals), **Mickey Raphael** (harmonica), **Shawn Camp** (acoustic guitar), **Ben Haggard** (electric guitar), and **Dan Dugmore** (steel guitar). There are even 13 sound engineers listed in the notes.

What's it all add up to?

Consider the other five albums Nelson has done for Legacy since 2012: *Heroes*: pop-country songs done by Nelson and guests including Haggard, **Snoop Dogg**, **Kris Kristofferson**, **Billy Joe Shaver**, **Sheryl Crow**, **Jamey Johnson**, and Nelson's sons **Lukas** and **Micah**.

Let's Face the Music and Dance: new studio performances by Nelson and family.

To All the Girls: newly recorded duets with **Dolly Parton**, **Mavis Staples**, **Sheryl Crow**, **Loretta Lynn**, **Wynonna Judd**, **Rosanne Cash**, **Alison Krauss**, **Miranda Lambert**, **Tina Rose**, **Carrie Underwood**, **Emmylou Harris**, **Norah Jones**, **Secret Sisters**, **Brandi Carlile**, **Lily Meola**, **Shelby Lynne**, **Melonie Cannon**, and his daughter **Paula Nelson**.

Band of Brothers: the first original songs — although mostly co-writes — from Nelson in nearly two decades.

December Day: Willie's Stash, Vol. 1: the first collection of archival songs featuring Nelson and his sister **Bobbie Nelson** doing new recordings of songs "that informed their musical heritage."

So, does *Django and Jimmie* — itself, or in combination with the five albums listed above — add up to a life? Or just a bunch of fun? Or simply cashing in on Nelson's (and Haggard's) reputations? Or a sort of long eulogy in progress?

Let's hope it's not the latter, although, despite the indications, nei-

ther he nor Haggard will be with us forever.

Eight years ago, I wrote, at a client's request and with the client's check deposited into my bank, a stage presentation, "Willie," as a tribute to Nelson. The project involved quite a bit of secondary research into Nelson; the product itself was written for someone on stage alone, portraying Nelson, singing snippets of many of his hits and talking about his life to an extent that he almost never did on stage. There were just so many songs that people expected to hear that there wasn't time for talking. It began with a child's voice in the dark, asking, "What are you looking at me for? I ain't got nothing to say. If you don't like the looks of me, You can look the other way." That was Nelson's very first stage experience.

Then, in the tribute, from a passage from one of his books, these words:

"A long time ago when I walked onto a stage to do a show, I would search the room with my eyes. I was looking for somebody who was looking at me, who appeared interested in learning what I was doing in front of the microphone with a guitar in my hands.

"Once I found that friendly face, I would sing to that person all night long. I would zero in and make heavy contact with their spirit. And it would grow.

"The flash of energy between me and the one friendly face would reflect into others, and it would keep growing — these bolts of energy ping-ponging from one table to the next, or from one pair of dancers to the couple dancing nearby — and before long I would have the whole crowd caught up in my music and me.

"It all had to start with one friendly face."

I remain one of those friendly faces. ■

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A
Documentary
About
Dallas Bluesmen
SATURDAY JUNE 30
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POOR DAVID'S PUB
Doors @ 7:00p.m.
Screening @ 8:00p.m.
Live Music at 9:00 p.m.
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DIRECTED BY JAKE GLENN PRODUCED BY JAKE GLENN & SAM BASE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY NICK PACIONE
MUSIC BY JACKIE DON LOE JEROME POPOORN LOUDEN CARL GENERAL FALLS BUSH PERRY JONES PETER KAPLAN JAY DRONGE SIMONE GUNDY SUPERSTAR HAROLD WALKER LOU HAMPTON