

# RECORD REVIEWS

## Stoney Larue Us Time One Music

US TIME IS A SOLID COLLECTION of 11 **Stoney Larue** fan favorites from the past 15 years, a well-delivered, often pensive mix of originals and covers.

The most interesting, to me, are Larue's interpretations of two classics: "Into the Mystic," a fine, often covered song he manages to make his own, and, with **Cody Canada**, "Seven Spanish Angels." It's always cool to hear people bring something different to such classics.

The third of four well known covers is "Wichita Lineman," which contains one of the lines I marvel at for saying so much in so few words: "I need you more than want you."

The fourth is "Empty Glass," a last cigarette, drunk again at closing time, "but somehow I'll make it home."

"This project is a tribute to my fans," he said. "We have developed a strong relationship and I appreciate all of them. Together we have built a compilation of fan favorites from our shows that reflect the complexion of our time together in music . . ."

**R.S. Field** and **Van Fletcher** produced. Larue added acoustic guitar. Other musicians included **Kevin Sciou** (electric slide and National guitars), **David Grissom** (electric and acoustic guitars), **Warren Hood** (fiddle, mandolin, octave violin); **Steven R. Conn** (acoustic and electric pianos, Hammond organ, and accordion), **Greg Morrow** (drums), **Casey Twist** (electric bass guitar), and **Red Marlow** (harmony vocals).

—TOM GEDDIE

## Miss Marcy & her Texas Sugardaddy's Deep Ellum CSP Records

"IF YOU AIN'T THE WOMAN HE'S lying to then you're the woman he's lying about," claims **Miss Marcy** on the *Deep Ellum* collection of mostly rowdy songs for mostly bar audiences. And, she sings with her **Texas Sugardaddy's** -- that's the way she punctuates sugar daddies -- "I see you watchin' me like a one-eyed alley cat . . . there's no turning back, but I want you . . . I knew when I met you you'd be my next regret."

**Miss Marcy** -- **Marcy Rodsky**, she of the literature degree from the University of North Texas, she of a handful of 2013 blues honors from the *Dallas Observer* -- shares original songs that sound like old songs from the "glory days" of Deep Ellum, when parts of it really were deep, songs influenced by early 20th century icons including **Bessie Smith** and **Big Mama Thornton**, songs that wouldn't make it on the radio back then. Or, depending on the station and the particular song, perhaps not today.

She sings blues about sex and drugs, love (and what often passes for love) and blues with contributions from **Wes Starr** (drums),

**Bobby Chitwood** (bass), **Dave Burris** (guitar), **Jason Cloud** (guitar and dobro), **Brian "Hash Brown" Calway** (harmonica), **Tim Alexander** (piano and organ), and **Ron Jones** (baritone sax).

Amidst the often upbeat-sounding crowd pleasers, the slow-burning songs may be the best, including "You Make Me Do Things (that I really shouldn't do)" and her promise to him that "you will forget every gal you ever knew."

Other highlights: her own "Deep Ellum Blues" where she "tried to buy whiskey, all they had was cocaine;"

the murderous "Sugar Brown;" "I'm Gonna Miss You;" "Come with Me" because "it's all over town what you got swingin' between your knees;" "I Want You;" and more.

—TOM GEDDIE

## Brent Best Your Dog Champ Last Chance Records

**BRENT BEST'S** *YOUR DOG CHAMP* is filled with well crafted modern Americana songs that, lyrically, often have an old-fashioned feel. Best's voice is weary and rough.

The songs are well-played and produced. It's a dark album where, as a line in the last song indicates, "fabric frays and the context fails." Not the album's context, which is strong, but in the life or lives of the people in the songs.

One local music wise man said he believes the delicately told "Aunt Ramona" is the best song by a local singer-songwriter in the past 10 years.

My own favorite among the favorites is "Daddy was a Liar," an interesting, thoughtful song that begins with a bag of kittens, a brick, and a pond before eventually segueing to a pregnant young woman who's run away from home.

On 11 songs, Best shares a son's response to his mother's hatred of her husband; the sad story of a boy "coming of age" at nine years old; a son whose mother is trying to raise him right; a futile love song from the distance of time; a man who regrets stealing his own life; a man who isn't prepared for the sweet woman he finds, who he leaves and hopes his children will grow up like her; and a man who's unhappy with where he is: a man with a wife and kids who have four "pissed off cats" and a dog, and another cat that hides for lack of attention; the man stays instead of leaving.

"Aunt Ramona" could seem, to the casual listener, like a young boy's simple remembrance of a long-ago car trip but with, in a way, echoes of the Joad family moving from Oklahoma to California.

Best adds guitars, harmonica, organ, and bass. He's joined by **Grady Don Sandlin** (drums), **Ralph White** (fiddle, kalimba), **Drew Phelps** (bass), **Burton Lee** (pedal steel), **Petra Kelly** (violins), **Scott Danbom** (piano, melodic), **Andy Rogers** (banjo), and **Claude Bernard** (accordion).

*Your Dog Champ* is a fine album, telling such consistent stories that if re-arranged; they could be the basis for a novel about one man's life story. Perhaps with the addition of a happier ending. Or perhaps, realistically, not. Possibilities abound.

—TOM GEDDIE

## Courtney Patton So This Is Life Self-released

*SO THIS IS LIFE*: A COLLECTION of thoughtful lyrics from **Courtney Patton** on a bunch of country weepers about a woman done wrong. The songs, in her potentially haunting voice, tend to sound a lot alike. Which isn't necessarily a problem because they're all solid and at least a couple of them are more than solid.

Which are the more-than-solid ones? That's up to listeners to decide; I know a handful of people who consider Patton to be the best singer-songwriter in Texas right now, or at least one of the best.

My own favorites are "Little Black Dress," which a woman is saving to wear on a special night that turns out to be a lie; "Need for Wanting," where she's not looking for a man but ends up with one; "Battle These Blues," where she sings "I'm worth a little if

I ain't worth your best;" and "**Jason Eady's** "Where I've Been," where she says she hasn't been thinking about leaving as much as she used to."

Patton adds acoustic guitar and percussion to her vocals. She's joined by **Gerald Boyd** (acoustic and electric guitars, baritone guitar), **Mark Patterson** (drums), **Jerry Abrams** (upright and electric bass), **Geoff Queen** (pedal steel), **Steve Bernal** (cello), **Katie Rose Cox** (violin), and **Kelley Mickwee** and **Eady** (harmony vocals).

—TOM GEDDIE

## Louisiana Red Working Mule TopCat Records

CLEARLY, IF ANYONE EVER HAD a right to sing the blues, it was **Louisiana Red** (born **Iverson Minter**). He lost his mother to pneumonia one week after his birth in 1932 and his father was lynched by the KKK five years later, followed by six years of foster home nightmares as well as mistreatment from his own family. When he was 11, he was playing guitar in the style of **Muddy Waters** and playing street corners with friends in Pittsburgh.

His grandfather was a self-taught slide guitarist and it wasn't long before young Iverson was getting attention for his own slide guitar work. When he was 15, a demo he had recorded got the attention of Chess Records, and that year, 1952, he met Muddy Waters and recorded his first songs on the Checker label using Muddy's band, which included **Little Walter** and **Jimmy Rogers**. When his recording career didn't take off, he went to work at the Oldsmobile plant in Lansing, Michigan. While checking out the blues scene in nearby Detroit, he encountered **John Lee Hooker**, who would become a major influence and musical mentor. They recorded together for two years in the late 50s.

He was drafted during the Korean conflict and after his discharge, he and his guitar were slugging it out in NYC, and now he was calling himself "Louisiana Red."

His first release, *Lowdown Back Porch Blues* (Roulette, 1963) garnered critical attention and included his first hit, "Red's Dream." More hits resulted in international attention and he was soon a regular performer in Europe. The 60s and 70s saw Red releasing records on many labels and by 1981, he moved to Germany, where he married his wife, **Dora**. He continued performing and recording for European labels and was widely regarded as a master of blues slide guitar as well as a formidable blues singer, and prolific songwriter.

By the time of his passing in 2012, Red had recorded over 50 albums and his musicianship was heralded as peerless and evocative.

The moods and textures Louisiana Red was able to create with his deft guitar work and distinctive voice are quickly apparent in *Working Mule*, TopCat Record's new album of previously unreleased live performances, recorded in Greece from 1994 through 2007.

This is one of the best sounding blues releases this writer has heard in some time. Every nuance and flourish of his guitar counts and his singing is harrowing. Not only does Red present country blues and all the classic blues forms with a righteous authority, he manages to convey a very important blues theme, the classic "Devil On My Tail" feeling that informed **Robert Johnson's** greatest works and the results are nothing less than haunting.

—CHUCK FLORES

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# AMERICANA TEXAS

By Tom  
Geddie

**WHAT MAKES A SONG** memorable? Surely an impossible question to answer, so I asked my Facebook friends — musicians, music fans, an assortment of ages, preferences — to answer it. Many more did so than I have space to share here, even editing down some of the responses.

**Angel Westfall:** My favorite songs speak to my heart. In some way they remind me of myself. It's like someone saying 'don't worry, I've been there, too, you'll be ok. You're not alone.'"

**Tom Weber:** "Emotions that ring true to me; a lyric that is not over-thought out and feels like a natural expression of the heart. Usually I know because the hair on the back of my neck stands on end."

**Missy Dunfee:** "Certain songs make me think of those who I was very close to, and the circumstances behind the history of any given song which connects me to the other person."

**Andrea Dawson:** "I am a sucker for a song that gives me a different worldview or uncovers something I already knew but it now has a voice."

**Tom Green:** "For me, lyrics are first, then music, and then, if there is a singer, a voice that has a unique sound. Example: LaFave's voice."

**David Reznik:** A song becomes special to me when I subconsciously attach a visceral memory to it. **Merle Haggard's** "Silver Wings" takes me back to the first time I asked a girl to dance and she said yes. It evokes every sensory part of the original experience. A special song has that ability to shiver your spine, still your heart, or tear up your eyes with no explainable reason. Over analysis can ruin the whole feeling."

**Rodney Hayden:** "A song that feels

like it was written just for you. A shared experience, a secret connecting you to the artist."

**Wes Wilson:** "The lyrics are always #1 for me. If they tell a good story and/or I can relate to the lyrics, then that's going to be a special song to me."

**Kathleen Ann Hudson:** "Sometimes I hear something I have always known but never said. There's a crack in everything. That's where the light gets in. And we are all tangled up in blue. Yes. Sorrow and solitude, these are the precious things."

**Elizabeth Burnam:** "Some are like aural photos of my past and how I was then, who was there, how I felt, how things are different now."

**Deanna Arnold:** "Some songs can bring back joyous memories, but at the same time a strong longing for the person the memories are about. 'In the Arms of an Angel.' I love that song, but all I can think about is mama and the fact that I can never see her beautiful smile again except in pictures, or hear her laugh, or feel the loving and warmth of her hugs."

**Grady Yates:** "Some songs touch a place in your soul you never knew existed. **Nanci Griffith's** 'Love at the Five and Dime' comes to mind."

**Jerry Tubb:** "A catchy phrase or riff that grabs your imagination, that draws you into the song, makes you want to hear it again."

**Ellen Sweets:** "The rhythmic, mathematical lyricism of almost any instrumental composition by **J.S. Bach** generates joyful contemplation, even in a minor key."

**Jamal Mohamed:** "The groove of course. It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing."

**Andrea Wallace:** "A break or tremor in a vocal, earthy not slick, raw not glossy. An instrument that

speaks, breathes, resonates, melds, emits, personifies; feeling not techno gymnastics."

**Nestor DePrille:** "It just has to move me in an unfamiliar or refreshing direction . . . The secret is allowing the music to pull you along, take you where it's headed."

**Imaj Thomas:** "Something about it just feels like home. Where the heart is. That goes for hearing a special song as well as having a special song you write."

**Jeffrey Barnes:** "Genuine emotion eloquently, beautifully, and honestly expressed."

**Sally Williams:** "When I know I want to hear it again. Walking through Eggemeier's store in San Angelo, loved the song, asked what it was, bought the CD, and still hit repeat to hear it again after all these years. It was a Texas polka."

**Bob Franke:** "A song means something to me if it tells the truth, and if it's so well constructed I almost don't notice how well constructed it is. And I've trained myself to notice."

**Eileen Dolan:** "It is an amalgamation of many elements' voice, harmonies, harmonies determination of melody. I could go on and on about the loss of melody in popular music. The thing I like so much about **Sarah Jarosz's** version of 'Simple Twist of Fate' is the arrangement: sparse, just her and the cello, yet so perfect for the poetry. The lyrics are always really important to me, and the voices, their delivery, not so much their beauty, because the beauty is in the conviction, the artist shines in the voice, if they are a singer. So much nuance of the soul can be conveyed in the voice."

The last words go to **Aubrey Tetter:** "If the song paints the picture in my mind where never goes away." ■