



Reflecting Growth

Keb Mo made his first splash as a country-blues artist, and in some quarters is still seen that way. But he's been steadily moving in different directions, and his latest disc finds him mining the veins of soul, blues, rock, pop, and even jazz to make a mature artistic statement.

From the first cut, "The Whole Enchilada," it's apparent there is a lot here to listen to and for. A funky pop tune, it's highlighted by the artist's (whose real name is Kevin Moore) slinky, melodic slide guitar. Soul guitarist David T. Walker supplies backing here, and on most of these cuts, while Moore's

vocals, coupled with a chorus of fine singers, are on the money.

From the quiet soul

always interesting and with a familiar feel.

All are original except a perfect-fit cover of the Eagles' "One of These Nights" that has a quiet, jazzy feel with one of his best vocals. "My Baby's Tellin' Lies," written by Moore and Vince Gill, has an incredible hook, on-the-money vocals from both, and punchy single-note riffing from Moore – quintessential soul guitar.

Moore has created an album heavy on funk and soul that harkens to West-Coast pop from the late '70s/early '80s. And while most albums these days run long, this one leaves you wanting more. – *John Heidt*



Keb Mo
The Reflection

Yola Belle International

of "All the Way" to the Steely-Dan-influenced title cut, Moore's guitar is featured, but never in-your-face; his slide work is always tasteful, and his songs include changes that'll make any player smile – never clichéd,

the longest cut on the album, seems purposely over the top; the CD would've held together better without it.

Keeping an all-instrumental album interesting for 45 minutes is no small task, but Louhivuori succeeds. – *DF*



Chris Thile and Michael Daves

Sleep With One Eye Open

Nonesuch Records

Two guys, two instruments, two voices, and nothing else – the musical equivalent of high-wire walking sans net. But if those two guys are Chris Thile and Michael Daves, the results are far more musically complex and interesting than you'd expect.

The music here isn't strictly bluegrass. Instead, it's a combination of bluegrass merged with old-timey verve along with more than a dollop of modern acoustic jazz. At times, it has an almost ferocious edge, as with their version of "Tennessee Blues." The playing is virtuosic throughout; most of the solos have a "without a net" quality of on-the-spot improvisational brilliance. Even the vocals have their share of pleasant musical surprises, as they merge in a way usually reserved for siblings. On tunes such as "You're Running Wild," they have an almost Everly-Brothers-like melding of their voices. Acoustic music doesn't get any better. – *SS*



MonkeyJunk
To Behold

Stony Plain Records

Despite the fact that the U.S. and Canada share the continent of North America, no Yank will endear himself to his northern neighbors by referring to them as "Americans." So, what to call Americana music when there's an increasing number of Canadians (Steve Dawson; the Duhks; Roxanne Potvin) making it?

Perhaps the best course of action is to adopt the approach taken when eating an unfamiliar dish in a New Orleans restaurant; don't worry about what it's called, just dig in and enjoy!

Whatever this trio of Alberta musicians call their music, it has heft in the form of a very satisfying bluesed-up cover of Hank Williams' "You're Gonna Change (Or I'm Gonna Leave)" along with a harmonica-laced piece of Blue Rodeo-/Jayhawks-flavored (but much more sanguine) country ("Running In The Rain") and a Band-like ballad called "All About You." And is it just my imagination, or is MonkeyJunk one of several newer bands who seem to have a bit of Savoy Brown ("While You Are Mine") mixed into their style?

"Americana" became a musical term in part because it refers to music that

borrowed from several genres – country, blues, and folk especially. That used to be called rock and roll.... or, come to think of it, just "music." Led by coproducer/guitarist/harmonica player/vocalist Steve Marriner, MonkeyJunk is very good at making "music." – *RA*



Henry Gross
Rhymes and Misdemeanors

Right as Rain

Zelda Records

Say what you will about veteran rocker Henry Gross, you can't call him lazy. He has just released two records, each with 21 songs – and virtually every cut has something to offer.

Generally speaking, *Rhymes and Misdemeanors* is the more uptempo of the two. Gross plays rock guitar on "The Truth Is Not For Everyone," which showcases solos as mini compositions beyond simple turn-it-up-and-play affairs. And while he's always melodic, it's especially obvious on songs like "The Best Things in Life," a horn-driven soul/rock tune. There are ballads, especially on *Right as Rain*, and at least a dozen cuts between the two that some enterprising young band could turn into a country hit. Given country radio's pop overtones these days, and the great hooks offered here by Gross, it wouldn't be a stretch to say there are at least a half-dozen potential hits.

The years haven't measurably diminished Gross' vocal talents, either. For a guy whose falsetto supplied the focus of his biggest hit, 1976's "Shannon," his voice has stood the test of time and still shows an amazing versatility that's tough on the rockers and tender on the ballads. – *JH*

DVDs



Glenn Tilbrook & The Fluffers

Live In New York City

MVD Visual

Recently, Tilbrook and his writing partner and vocal foil, Chris Difford, have reunited as Squeeze, one of the best pop-rock bands to transition from New Wave to mainstream. During their many breakups, however, Tilbrook continued to record and tour, both as a solo artist and as leader of the four-piece Glenn Tilbrook & The Fluffers.

Prior to this concert DVD, the only video of Tilbrook was *Glenn Tilbrook: One For The Road*, subtitled "The Story Of One Man, Two Guitars, And An RV" – Amy Pickard's charming documentary (featuring plenty of live performances) of Tilbrook's first solo tour of America, during which he opted for a mobile home over Lear jets and roadside campgrounds over five-star hotels.