

only three years since EMI released the 4CD *Harvest Years (1969-1973)* box set, which covered the same five albums contained herein – *Wasa Wasa*, *Sing Brother Sing*, *Edgar Broughton Band*, *In Side Out* and *Oora* – but which also included a fat booklet, numerous bonuses and a bloodcurdling, hitherto unreleased 1970 Hyde Park live set. Original Album Series, its CDs interred in a Houdini-defeating slipcase, provides none of these: but it does at least apportion one CD apiece to each of the albums. Which is nice.

As with *Harvest Years*, you can't help feeling that five EBB albums is rather more than enough. The good stuff is absolutely primo, though – whether it's the early free-festival slurry-rock (*Love In The Rain*, *Evil*, *Neptune*), with its enraged mallard wah-wah and Beefheartian exclamations, or those unsettling, get-some-therapy recitations (*Refugee*, *Dawn Crept Away*, *Psychopath*). Their self-titled 1971 album taps their potential most convincingly: fingers of light poke through the squat blinds, and in *Madhatter*, *Evening Over Rooftops* and *For Dr Spock*, they find a creatively fulfilling third way between the stoner humour and volcanic rage. *Oregano Rathbone*

## Jack Bruce

### Silver Rails

★★★★★

Esoteric Antenna EANTCD 1028

### Somethin Els

★★★★

Esoteric ECLEC 2427

### Cities Of The Heart

★★★★★

Esoteric ECLEC 22428 (2CD)

### Monkjack

★★★★★

Esoteric ECLEC 2429

### May he never Jack it in

It's a fair cop: *Silver Rails* breaks no new ground; OK, with the possible exception of *Drone*, a fuzz-bass dogfight in 11/8. But then, breaking new ground is hardly the duty of a man on the eve of his 71st birthday. What *Silver Rails* does do is confirm that Jack Bruce's voice is still a devil-pact thing of wonder: his range and passion are undiminished, his vibrato preternaturally controlled. Bases covered herein include Cream-y riff roughage (*Rusty Lady*, with Robin Trower), trenchcoated blues-noir (*Reach For The Night*), venerable rockers revisited (*Keep It Down*, *No Surrender*) and a characteristically transported piano ballad, *Industrial Child*. And, do you

consider the following remastered reissues. *Something Els* is weakened by the most frightful 80s production viruses: "orchestral stabs", and the Gated Snare Of Destiny. State-of-the-art in its day – but it don't mean Jack. The extra tracks utterly redeem it: exquisitely bare and forlorn versions of *Rope Ladder To The Moon* and *Hendrix's The Wind Cries Mary*.

*Cities Of The Heart*, culled from Bruce's heavy-friend-assisted 50th birthday concerts, robustly romps through even the sharpest corners of Jack's back catalogue (ie, *Over The Cliff* from *Things We Like*), while 1995's *Monkjack* is just Bruce, Bernie Worrell, a piano and a Hammond: beatific and beauteous. *Oregano Rathbone*

## Jim Capaldi

### The Contender

★★★

Esoteric ECLEC 22432 (2CD)

### Less Traffic, more middle-of-the-road

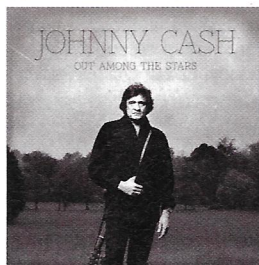
Between 1967 and the mid-70s, Jim Capaldi was as much part of the furniture at Island as Chris Blackwell's cuspidor: firstly with *Traffic*, and then by dint of his intermittently fruitful solo career. Over time, however, his relationship with the label withered on the vine.

*The Contender*, from 1978, emerged via his new contract with Polydor/RSO: this reissue Frankensteins together the European release with bonus tracks sourced from its American counterpart, *Daughter Of The Night*, which surfaced with a markedly different tracklisting. The second CD, meanwhile, contains a soulful, febrile, previously unissued 1978 recording of Capaldi and his effortlessly capable band – *The Contenders*, natch – live at Groningen.

Curly 70s flange effects notwithstanding, Capaldi ended up producing an album that casts occasional furtive glances towards the disco floor. He came to rue this in later life, but it's not an altogether unhappy affair: *Daughter Of The Night* and *Stay With You* (yes, the Gallagher & Lyle one) are sleek, swishy and perfectly amiable, while a fascinatingly schizoid reimagining of Brian Hyland's *Sealed With A Kiss* salts its tailfeather-friendly BPM with a sense-of-unease string arrangement. Oh, and *You Burn Me* features breezy steel pans played by Ralf Richardson: sadly not, as we first imagined, Sir Ralph Richardson. That would have



Bass in your face:  
Jack Bruce



## Johnny Cash

### Out Among The Stars

★★★★

Columbia/Legacy, cat no tbc (CD / LP)

### Unheard goodies and a couple of bad apples

The quick-fix history of Cash's recording career has a tendency to suggest his work with producer Rick Rubin, which began in the mid-90s, arrested a sharp decline in quality. But while it's true that some late-80s releases were seriously below par, ultimately leading to Columbia letting him go, it would be a mistake to dismiss his entire output of the decade.

This album goes part of the way towards salvaging Cash's reputation during that period; a dozen previously unreleased tracks recently discovered by

worth the price of admission just for a brace of classic story songs, in the title track's chronicle of an underclass forced into a life of crime ("He can't find a job, but Lord he's found a gun...") and the wary reunion of old flames *She Used To Love Me A Lot*.

Less palatable is the hurried, clumsy June Carter duet *Baby Ride Easy* (not a patch on the version recorded by June's daughter Carlene and Dave Edmunds), though the album's other high-profile guest, Waylon Jennings, is in fine form saddling up with Cash on *Hank Snow's I'm Moving On*.

It's easy to be cynical or apprehensive about "lost" tracks resurfacing years later, but there's enough A-grade material on *Out Among The Stars* to make its belated arrival something to celebrate. *Terry Staunton*

## Chrome

### The Visitation

★★★★★

Cleopatra, cat no tbc (LP)

### Debut LP back on black

About time too! Chrome's debut leaked out in 1976 and, apart from a reissue in 1989,

first steps, Chrome have airbrushed this early foray out of their history as psych-punk studio pioneers.

Recorded in a garage in San Francisco before guitarist Helios Creed joined the group, *The Visitation* is light years away from the incendiary power of 1977's *Alien Soundtracks* and '79's *Half Machine Lip Moves*. It's close to how Blue Öyster Cult might have sounded if they'd tried it on as punks. Opener *How Many Years Too Soon* is infused with a Stooges energy, as well as long, pealing, mid-70s super-group guitar solos; *Return To Zanzibar*, *Kinky Lover* and *Sun Control* are full of swagger. The tender ballad *Caroline* is a compelling contrast.

At the time of recording, drummer, producer, lyricist, trust-fund beneficiary and agoraphobic Damon Edge had yet to assume dominance within the group. Instead, experienced Bay Area musicians John Lambdin and Gary Spain make vital musical contributions, while Edge's sound effects and cut-up production techniques give the