

bored. Not a must-have, but a nice record of what this legend was doing during a commercial downtime in his career. — JH



**Todd Rundgren**, *Arena* (Hi-Fi Recordings) Rundgren returns to his heavy, guitar-laden pop of yore on this energetic CD. There are plenty of wicked solos and riffs, plus T.R.'s trademark vocal harmonies. Equally cool is the low-fi home-recording job, featuring gnarly axe tones and fierce, politically charged lyrics about the state of the nation. Todd may have just turned 60, but he's still angry as hell. — *Pete Prown*



**Philip Vandermost**, *Automatic August* (Self-distributed) Vandermost handles all instruments except drums, and proves as adept at playing them as he does at writing fine rock and pop songs. A strong Beatle influence shines through, and cuts like "Speak to Me," "Climb Aboard," and Philip's wonderfully melodic sense on guitar make this disc a winner. — *JH*



**Melonie Cannon**, *And The Wheels Turn* (Rural Rhythm Records) On her second release Melonie Cannon continues to explore the spaces between bluegrass and country music. Her very radio-friendly voice and care-

fully considered phrasing make her lead vocals both arresting and emotionally accessible. The two original songs demonstrate her knack for pithy songwriting. Produced by her father, the legendary Buddy Cannon and bluegrass superstar Ronnie Bowman, the sidemen list includes almost every first-call player in Nashville. — *SS*



**Twang Dragons**, *Twangasm* (Self-released) "Twang" is indeed the word here. Led by Tommy Dixon's twang-tastic Tele work, this country rock band's got a catchy sound of lush melodies and loads of snappy guitar. — *MD*



**Indigenous**, *Broken Lands*, (Vanguard Records) Driven still by sole remaining original member Mato Nanji, the guitarist who helped fuel the band's early works, this release is full of blues-based tunes that show an ever-searching musician and songwriter. Second guitarist Kris Lager adds doses of slide guitar that help move the songs forward. — *JH*

**Nick Pagliari**, *Please and Thank You* (Palagreeno Records) This modern singer/songwriter



combines pop attitude with the right amount of sensitivity to create an arresting musical amalgam. At times he sounds like a young Nick Lowe, others like Peter Case during his rocker phase. Regardless of which he may allude to, Pagliari creates unique and instantly affecting music. — *SS*



**Allen Hinds**, *Falling Up* (Self-released) His multi-layered guitar tracks create moody and stylish rock instrumentals, and his electric tone is rich and soaring; his slide work pure deep blues mud. — *MD*



**Mad Buffalo**, *Wilderness*, (Mad Buffalo Records) Brainchild of Randy Riviere, an apparent fan of Southern rock and Neil Young, this album is full of guitars that soar and vocals layered to bring each and every one of the 12 cuts to life as he sings about searching, real or metaphorical. — *JH*



**Buena Vista Social Club**, *At Carnegie Hall* (World Circuit/Nonesuch) These two live CDs

from the July 1, 1998 concert have been a long time coming — but well worth the wait. Here are all the now-classic tunes from the Ry Cooder-produced album done live with that added sparkle. — *MD*



**Genticorum**, *La Bibournoise* (Roues et Archets) This trio feels their Quebecois background makes their music unique. But their kinship with English-only monolingual players will be immediately obvious to even casual listeners. Still, cool music with the added perk of giving you a chance to improve your French-speaking skills. — *SS*



**Street Dogs**, *State Of Grace* (Hellcat records) Punk ain't dead, as the Street Dogs prove — and at full thrash speed and volume! These 11 tracks of neo-punk rock from the West Coast are alive with urgency and energy. — *MD*



**James Brown**, *Double Dynamite*, (MVD Visual) A 1980 appearance at Studio 54 and a '85 stop at Atlanta's Chastain Park Stadium show Brown alternating between being riveting and



**Byther Smith**, *Blues On The Moon* (Delmark) Byther Smith inherited the mantle of Chicago soul and blues from his stint backing Otis Rush. This live CD and DVD from the South Side Natural Rhythm Social Club proves he's keeping it alive and burning with stinging guitar. — *MD*



**Ralph Stanley**, *Old-Time Pickin': A Clawhammer Banjo Collection* (Rebel Records) Most banjo players use the fingerpicking roll style. But the claw hammer technique pre-dates the finger-roll style by decades and Stanley ranks as its best-known practitioner. This 18-song collection includes nine previously unissued tunes and three that have never before been on a CD. A welcome addition to Stanley's discography. — *SS*



**Reynold D. Philipsek**, *Anthology* (Self-released) These 16 tracks of original Gypsy jazz and American jazz blend together into a stylish whole in Philipsek's hands. His guitarwork is pure and inspired, melodic and cool—whatever he's playing. — *MD*