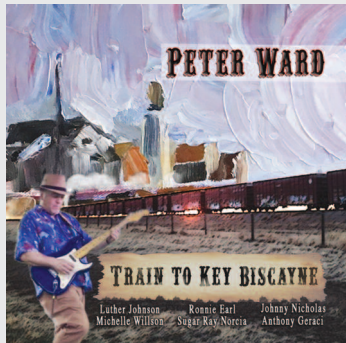


MIKE GREENBLATT'S RANT 'N' ROLL

All Aboard!

Peter Ward is on the *Train To Key Biscayne* (Gandy Dancer Records) with an all-star crew of top-notch blues A-Listers. This all-original 12-track gem, the follow-up to his 2017 *Blues On My Shoulders* debut, features some of the



guys from the band of Muddy Waters plus some of New England's finest. Ronnie Earl, Sugar Ray Norcia, Guitar Junior, Johnny Nicholas, Anthony Geraci, and Evil Gal Willson get to shine both instrumentally and vocally in front of the house band which has Peter's brother, Mudcat Ward, on bass. Highlights include the Eubie Blake-inspired "As Long As I Have A Chance," and the album opener "The Luther Johnson Thing" (sung by Johnson himself, a former Muddy sideman). Texan Nicholas sings two. The Evil Gal sings two. It's a democratic free-for-all. Ward, known as Hi-Fi in Boston, where he's the town's blues kingpin, plays bass on two, sings one, and plays a chunky, rhythmic guitar with splashes of electricity like lightning when he solos throughout. Highly recommended.

London Calling

So, England doesn't wanna be in Europe anymore? America may still have President Moron, but the various artists on *Gonna Make It Alone: Brexit Rockers* pretty much sums up the pathetic state of affairs in England right now. Politics aside, these 24 tracks—

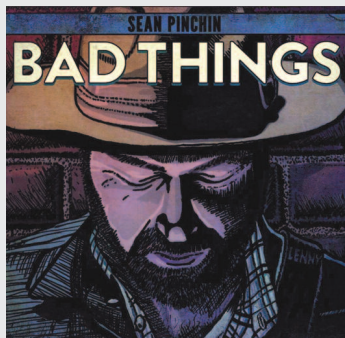


including rockers by Dion, Billy Fury, Tommy Steele, Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Bo Diddley, George Jones, and Faron Young—go from "Your Cash Is Nothing But Trash," "I Don't Need You No More," "No Money In This Deal," "Don't Push Me Too Far," "Lies Lies Lies," "She Done Me Wrong," "Pity Me," and "Messed Up," to "There's Something Wrong With You." It was only a matter of time before the good folks at England's Atomicat

Records would put together such a compilation. Hey, it don't matter if you ain't up to speed on what's happening across the pond, you can still dance to this stuff.

Canada Calling

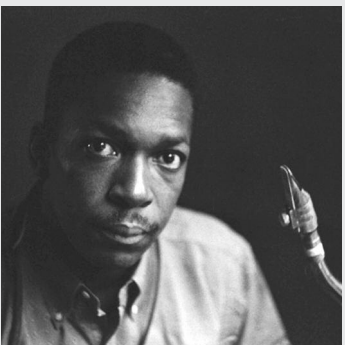
From his 2013 *Rust Bucket* to his 2016 *Monkey Brain*, Toronto singer-songwriter and guitarist Sean Pinchin has become one of Canada's premier bluesmen. Now, he's gone off and done some real *Bad Things*. These three



covers and five originals burn with style and flair. Just months before his death, "Devil Got My Woman," in 1968, was the last song that the legendary Mississippi Delta bluesman Skip James ever recorded. Pinchin's cover features his signature Resonator slide played in a moody mode as the song builds in intensity. Conversely, "Nobody's Fault But Mine," in 1927, was the very first song Blind Willie Johnson ever recorded. Having the kind of chops that can only be honed by over 250 shows a year in each of the last two years, drummer Mary-Jane Luvite and bassist, producer, and co-writer Rob Szabo are skin-tight, giving this slide master not only room to move, but acreage of space in which to totally impress.

Sheets Of Sound

John Coltrane has been dead for 52 years, but his influence is still alive and growing. That's because he revolutionized the tenor sax to the point of practically inventing a new language.



That ascent is in full flower on the incredible 5-disc box set, *Coltrane '58: The Prestige Recordings* (Craft), for it is here—in this year, on this label—that his style, flair, and the kind of never-before-heard idiosyncratic propensities came to light. Sure, he had already

been elevated to stardom as featured soloist in the bands of Monk and Miles, but it is on these exact 37 recordings where he zoomed off into the stratosphere. Please note that this is not the sixties Trane that went off the rails into the kind of cosmic slop that oftentimes made him unlistenable. No, this is a precursor to all that. Pristine. Adventurous. Bold. And he did it with musicians who would go on to be leaders and stars in their own right: trumpeters Donald Byrd, Wilbur Harden, and Freddie Hubbard, bassist Paul Chambers, drummers Art Taylor, Jimmy Cobb, and Louis Hayes, all from sessions at legendary producer Rudy Van Gelder's home studio in Hackensack. Blues. Bebop. Standards. Ballads. Didn't matter. Critic Ira Gitler famously dubbed these sessions as "sheets of sound." Get on this Trane!

Where The Blues & Gospel Collide

Harry Manx and Steve Marriner have put together a sumptuous sound for their new duo, the Manx Marriner Mainline. As solo artists, they've each commanded their own followings as



roots rock cats whose respect for deep alternative Americana artforms are like the strong roots of a towering tree. Now they're *Hell Bound For Heaven* on their debut for the esteemed Stony Plain Records label. Manx sings superbly and plays slide guitar, banjo, and his trademark Mohan Veena (a sitar/guitar combo with anywhere from 12 to 20 strings). Marriner sings so cool (especially on the blues) while playing electric, slide, baritone, and 12-string guitars plus harmonica, bass, Hammond B-3 organ, and drums. They produced and added six originals to their four delectable covers of Harry Loes' 1920 "This Little Light Of Mine," Charlie Patton's 1930 "Rattlesnake Blues," Reverend Gary Davis' 1960 "Death Has No Mercy," and The Staples Singers' 1967 "Wish I Had Answered." Highly recommended.

These Two Guys

Dos Hombres: Wanted (VizzTone Label Group) is by Rockin' Johnny (from California) and Quique Gomez (from Spain). Both top-notch international bluesmen with their own



followings, they teamed up to be *Wanted* on these 12 tracks (which includes a terrific reworking of Robert Lockwood's 1974 "Funny But True"). Johnny plays guitar, Quique plays harp, and they both sing (Quique used to sing Sinatra songs in Madrid with a Spanish big-band). Add drums and bass, trombone, piano, and accordion, and you've got an instant party. These two guys know how to blues it up to the max.

Duo Extraordinaire: No Rhythm Section Needed!

Electric guitarist Bill Frisell and acoustic bassist Thomas Morgan have upped the ante on their follow up to the brilliant 2017 *Small Town* duo debut. *Epistrophy* (ECM) is dreamy, heavenly, complex, satisfying, and unlike anything else



PHOTO BY MONICA JANIE FRISSELL

out there. You don't need the words of the 1960 Drifters hit "Save The Last Dance For Me." You can hear them in your head as Frisell's lead lines have the tone and melody of a vocal. Ditto for "Red River Valley," a folk song from the eighteen-hundreds. The 1967 James Bond theme "You Only Live Twice," shorn of all artifice, brings its gorgeous melody to the fore. Miles Davis always said he loved Sinatra's phrasing on the 1955 hit "In The Wee Small Hours Of The Morning." Frisell captures the loneliness inherent in the song with a guitar figure that practically weeps. Between the two Monk pieces (the title tune and "Pannonica"), plus Paul Motian's "Mumbo Jumbo" (a hard-as-hell song to play but both did in the late drummer's band), *Epistrophy* is an early contender for best jazz album of the year.

—Greenblatt