

## RE. ISSUES

but the full-length set is bolstered by "Elo Kiddies," "Southern Girls" and a killer cover of the Move's "California Man."  
—Greg Beets

### Howlin' Wolf

*Rockin' the Blues:  
Live in Germany 1964  
(Acrobat Music)*

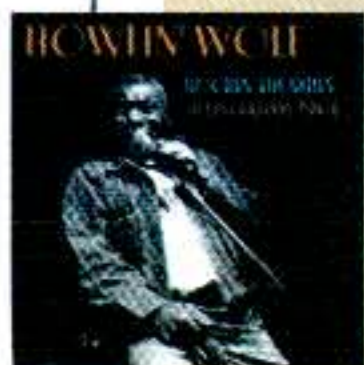
This is one fine recording—classic Wolf with the classic band: Hubert Sumlin, Sunnyland Slim, Willie Dixon and Clifton James. The slightly chancy quality of the recording just adds to the vibe of really being with the Wolf. Life was impermanent and chancy, and that's what he sang about. Something low-key and laidback about this show just ratchets up the intensity.

The Wolf was a fearsome figure, seemingly ready to cut down anything that challenged him and never happy except on stage. Comments from those who knew him support this image—he was known to carry a pistol, he publicly and articulately chastised those who offended him, and yet his wife reports that at home he was quiet and moody, just a guy who wanted to be left alone to read the paper. This, by the way, contradicts the widely-held notion that Wolf could not read.

The program here starts off with "Shake It For Me" and contains a number of Wolf classics mixed with a few lesser-known songs. The band is tight, light and bright, leaving lots of room for Wolf to be Wolf. The ultimate showman, he wasn't above crawling on his hands and knees while he howled, and he could do stuff with a harmonica—well, you had to see it.

I love this album; it reveals a more private and sensitive side of the Wolf than his recordings usually do and shows how totally pro he was in every way. As it also contains some fine solos and ensemble playing from legendary Chicago musicians, it's a total winner.

—Robin the Hammer



From day one, the best of the best have taken notice. Among the top-notch players and singers on this album are steel legend Al Perkins and shooting-star guitarist Buddy Miller. At first, DeMeyer may sound like Rickie Lee Jones on the carefree, finger-snappin' "Lookin' for Moses." Her unique ways, however, quickly unfold with the one-two punch of the rockabilly-fired "Without You" and the big, slinky blues-rocker "Wicked to Win," with Miller really tearin' one up on the latter. DeMeyer then reveals her wisdom and zeal in the powerful "Bird," an unadorned acoustic showcase of vulnerability and voice. But even that's outdone by "Shepherd," pure mountain-stream gospel that's simply stupendous. Conversely, in "Justice," the edgy vibe (secular or sacred?) is lit by the fire and brimstone of a Southern Baptist church. Within this set of songs the variety is unending and the appeal constant. Take note and listen, something will be drastically amiss if this album isn't draped in accolades and awards by year's end. —Tom Clarke

## Asylum Street Spankers

*What? And Give Up Show Biz? 2 CDs ♦ (Yellow Dog Records)*

The first and only time I saw the Spankers, they started the show by informing the audience that they didn't use electricity, not even microphones, and we were all going to have to be reeeal quiet. And damn if 300 or more rowdy New York music fans didn't! And damn if it wasn't worth it, because these folks sure can play and sing.



Reviewers use adjectives like "irreverent, original, unorthodox" as if this were a surprise. It's a lot of hard work being the best, and at what they do, these guys are the best. They play a few classics, like "Everybody Loves My Baby," "Tight Like That," "TV Party"—wait a minute, how'd that get in here? And they play a few originals, with names like "My Baby in the CIA," "You Only Love Me for My Lunch-box" or "Pakalolo Baby." See what I mean? Not to mention the asides, interludes and entr'acte between songs, where you get to know them a little too well. They even have a YouTube hit, "Stick Magnetic Ribbons on Your SUV."

Well, with two discs full of the Spankers live, you should be set for a nice long session of dynamite playing and singing, simpatico bitching and whining, and some of the funniest and cleverest lyrics and routines you will ever hear (or see). Remember the last big-ticket show you went to? Walked out, didn't you? Should these low-down, lazy, left-leaning lounge lizards ever come your way, don't hesitate to plunk down the big bucks to see 'em. You'll be laughing too hard to walk!

—Robin the Hammer

## Jared Campbell

*Beyond the Gray ♦ (Self-Released)*

Singer/songwriter would be the easy tag to describe Jared Campbell, but he's much more than that. There's the stark, roots-inflected side of his music, but there's also the pop radio-minded side, not to mention the blue-eyed soul that peeks through the cracks. The Binghamton, NY native has steadily made a name for himself over the last several years through a homegrown effort, releasing his music independently and quite successfully. He's earned opening spots for artists from Journey too Gavin DeGraw, proving that his music is multi-faceted.



*Beyond the Gray* will appeal to many musical tastes. There's the gripping title track, a driving piece of melodic nirvana with a strong sense of spirituality, the slick acoustic pop groove of "I Do" and the soft shuffle and elegant piano work on "My Queen."