

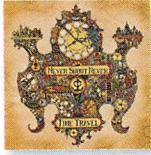
enveloped in every single track.

MELISSA CARUSO

## NEVER SHOUT NEVER

*Time Travel*

(WARNER BROS.)



ON *TIME TRAVEL*, NEVER Shout Never's Warner Bros. debut, singer/songwriter Christofer Drew knows how to capture the pure essence of raw emotions, which, combined with his artistry, make this masterpiece an entertaining experience.

To understand the future, one must visit the past for inspiration. *Never Shout Never* proves that old saying and then some, especially with the title track setting the tone for the rest of the album. All the songs here were written by Drew, except "Silver Ecstasy," penned by drummer Caleb Denison, where the lyrics transcend the lyricist's pain, making you believe in the passion of the struggle when you dare on love.

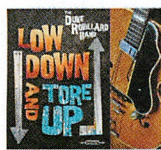
On "Lost at Sea," Drew's lyrics take an assertive role, conjuring impressive imagery and creating a powerful musical creation. Even though this is the album's last track, don't for one minute discount this tune—especially if you're looking for a different vocal side of this group.

RENEE DAIGLE

## THE DUKE ROBILLARD BAND

*Low Down and Tore Up*

(STONY PLAIN)



THE OUTSTANDING GUITARIST and blues historian Duke Robillard always manages to sound like he's having a great time. His music overflows with joy and enthusiasm, and *Low Down and Tore Up* is no exception.

Robillard loves exploring his musical roots. This latest outing treats listeners to a collection of blues standards from the '40s and '50s. Gutbucket guitar licks and delicate chords from pianist Matt McCabe bring Pee Wee Crayton's "After Hours" to life. Listeners will feel like they're in a

smoky barroom just before last call. John Lee Hooker's "Want Ad Blues" gets a lively, swinging arrangement while Robillard's vocals drip with sass. On "Let Me Play With Your Poodle," Robillard gleefully belts out the raunchy lyrics while McCabe pounds out rollicking piano riffs. "Twelve Year Old Boy" is another blues warhorse that Robillard makes his own. He tackles the wry lyrics with aplomb and churns out guitar licks that sound straight out of '50s Chicago.

In lesser hands, a collection of blues chestnuts could have been a dry history lesson. Thanks to Robillard's boundless energy, *Low Down and Tore Up* is a joyous romp through the blues' golden age.

JOHN KLEINMAN

## MEKONS

*Ancient & Modern*

(BLOODSHOT/SIX)



MEKONS HAVE DONE MUCH to confound us over the course of 26 albums recorded over the past 34 years. They were members of the first

wave of British punk but quickly began absorbing and displaying other influences, not least of which was country music. Fast forward to today and these erstwhile punks are comfortably housed under the big tent of Americana. Their most recent effort finds them performing dark songs of war and colonialism, with the tracks alternating between noisy/electric and quieter/acoustic-based.

The stage is set with the opening track, "Warm Summer Sun." It starts out painting a picture of a pleasant summer evening and ends, "I look out on corpses, skeleton trees, an unimaginable hell in front of my eyes." With those lines the band begins a journey, both musical and historical, of the past 100-plus years. While the journey may not always be pretty, the music manages to be both daring and fantastic.

In their three decades of existence, Mekons have recorded almost every sound imaginable, all the while writing lyrics that spoke to issues of class, politics and the society around them. This record is the fruition of those efforts. Years on, they've

produced one of their most ambitious albums ever.

STEVE FRAZIER

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

*Belly Full Of Blues*

(CATBONE UNRELEASED)



THIS IS ONE OF FIVE FINGER-lickin'-good CDs in Catbone's "Jukin' Wit Da Blues" series, each a collection of previously unreleased recordings

by some of the biggest, best and badassed blues legends and their progeny. Ken Hatley serves up this delicious blues plate special with three heaping helpings of James Cotton, succulent seconds of Howlin' Wolf and Little Richard, and tasty sides in various shades of blues by Tina Turner, Jack Millman, Barry Darnell and the Original Flares.

Muddy Waters' "She Moves Me," John Lee Hooker's "Sally Mae" and Cotton's "Sweet Sixteen" wonderfully capture both the A-side excitement of strolling the *Mean Streets* on *Saturday Night In Shankletown*, witnessing live music blasting from clubs like The Dew Drop Inn, and the B-side thrill of listening to it on 45-rpm records blaring from an old juke joint jukebox.

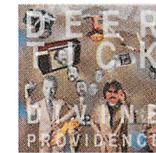
Wolf's "Poor Boy" and definitive version of "Red Rooster" are exquisite. "There Is A Man" has Nanette Workman's vocals soaring over a funky rhythm section, organ and Peter Frampton's guitar. "Fore Days Blues" features Billy Boy Arnold's menacing, haunting, insanely gorgeous harp playing and says everything you need to know without a single word.

DENNIS MCDONOUGH

## DEER TICK

*Divine Providence*

(PARTISAN)



AFTER DEER TICK'S THREE previous efforts boxed them into a specific genre, the band craved a departure parallel to their live sound. On

*Divine Providence*, Deer Tick sprinkles in bits and pieces of genres from the past 50 years while proudly supporting their Rhode Island roots.