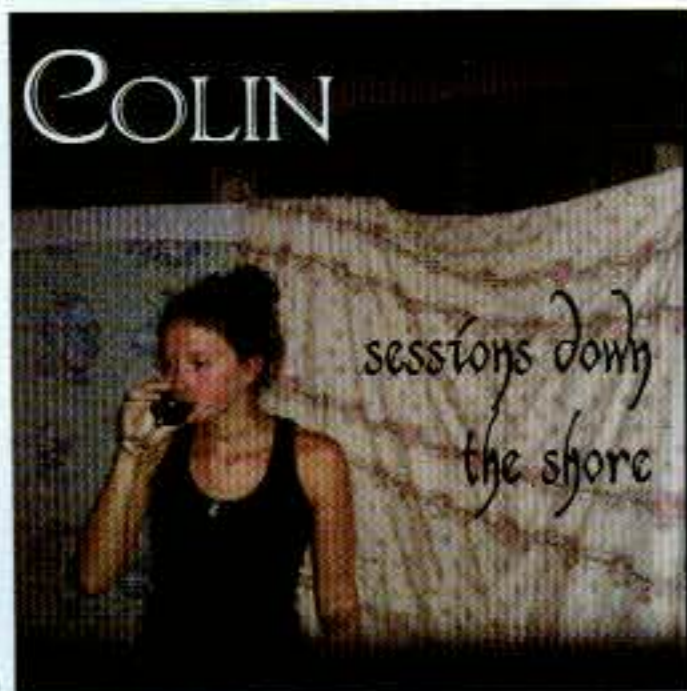


Colin Hogan *Sessions Down the Shore*



www.myspace.com/feistyfolker

by Kendra Desrosiers

Picture a folk acoustic guitar and vocals borrowed from the palette of Alanis Morissette and you have Colin Hogan—minus the bitchy betrayed femme undertone. The singer/songwriter hails from Newport News VA and unlike most musicians, Colin pursued a degree in Music Industry at Randolph-Macon College before taking a whack at the industry. After a few internships and years of performing at small venues in Virginia, she was finally able to record her debut album, *Sessions Down the Shore*, with the help of bass guitarist Brian Link.

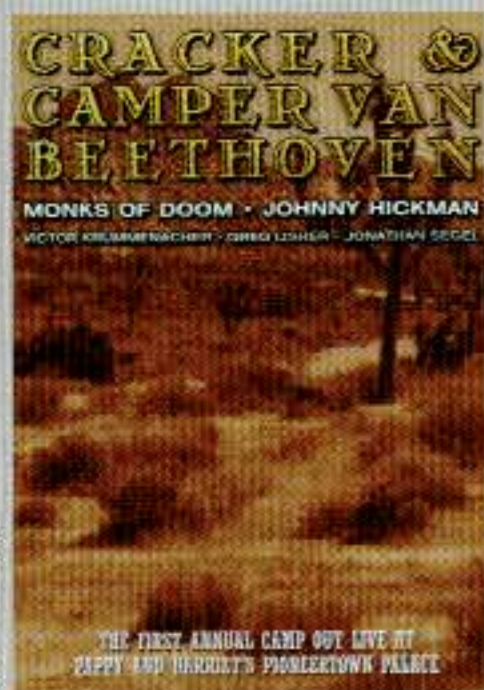
After a quick scan of Colin's

album cover and credits, it's clear that the LP was no professional production. A picture of a fatigued Colin sipping wine afront a bare mattress and hung comforter serves as cover art, confirming suspicions that the entire album was indeed recorded in an amateur studio in her Jersey beach house. Despite her potential in the folk realm, *Sessions Down the Shore* is in great need for more instrumental accompaniment: except in rare cases, an acoustic guitar can only suffice for a demo, and even then a mere tambourine can make a world of difference. Even with varied vocals the album proves

to be a drag and reminiscent of a live performance compilation. Colin's minimalist approach to composition has become a turnoff and her singles repetitive. Hopefully by her next project she'll expand from a lone guitarist to a full fledged band and record in a professional studio; now *that's* a crazy idea.

Cracker & Camper Van Beethoven

MVD VISUAL



www.mvdvisual.com

by Bill Kopff

OK, here's the thing: I *like* Cracker. And I *really like* Camper Van Beethoven. Camper's genre-blending of Eastern ethnic sounds with, well, everything from C&W to punk to bluegrass was way ahead of its time. And while listening to them now, it's hard to remember just how groundbreaking they were. But their music still holds up today.

So it was with some anticipation that I popped in the new live DVD, subtitled *The First Annual Camp Out Live at Puppy and Harriet's Pioneertown Palace*. The sepia-tinted cover promised performances by Cracker offshoots Monks of Doom, Jona-

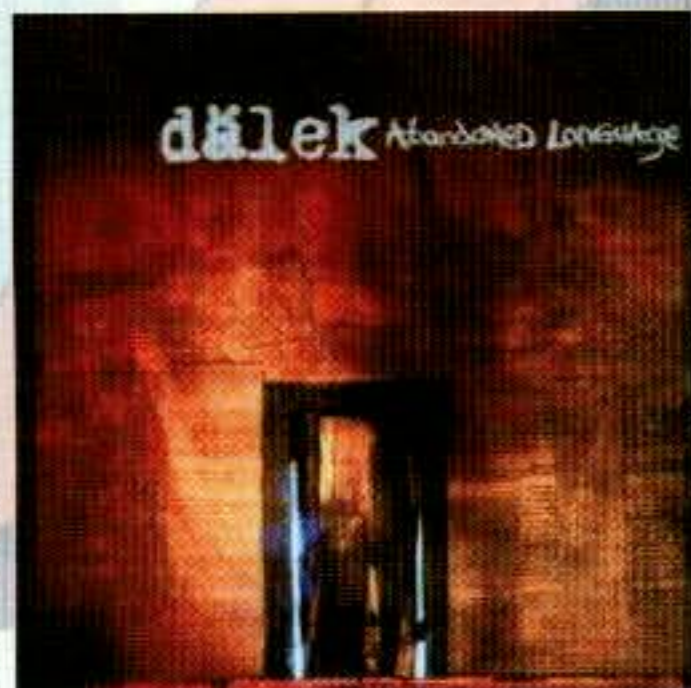
than Segel and others. But what a snooze this DVD turned out to be. Shot on videotape, its multi-camera production is crushingly dull and unimaginative. And almost all of the footage is imbued with a monochromatic hue.

As are, sadly, the performances. None of these acts is renowned for its visual presentations, and hey, that's fine. But during Camper's set, one can see that videos are being projected behind the band. The producers of this DVD have unwisely chosen not to let us, the home viewers, get a good look at them.

The spinoff/related acts unwittingly make the case that they do best within the confines of one of the main groups. Ironically, the most interesting performance—the "Porchstock" footage—has the lowest video quality. It's shot from a few feet away from the group, and people keep walking in front of the camera, headed off to hit the bathroom and/or grab another beer.

In the end, a set of (just-) good performances is marred by uninspiring videography. Recommended as an insomnia treatment.

Dalek *Abandoned Language*



www.myspace.com/dalek

by Celena Carr

While mainstream hip-hop moves more and more towards dance, groups like Dalek hold back on this movement, clinging to their Wu-Tang, *36 Chambers* influences. This is somehow antiquated and endearing at the same time. But production, handled by Oktopus, manages to keep their sound from seeming straight out of the nineties.

Vocals, by MC Dalek are spit slow and steady throughout, and rhymes are interesting though not inspired. This is a mellow brand of rap if ever there was, and you can't help but feeling

a bit of a contact high as every track eventually disintegrates into a multi-layered noise. On the best songs like title track, "Abandoned Language," a sense of melody is maintained as we slip from lyrics into instrumentals, and the duo achieves an almost velvet-lounge feel. On other occasions, the effect is uncomfortable and irritating. Layering so many sounds on top of one another is a delicate business, and Oktopus is guilty more than once of a heavy hand. "Bricks Crumble" is a good example: the background manages to sneak into the foreground, overshadow-

ing the lyrics for over half of the song. "Paragraphs Relentless" is another victim; the cacophony of sounds in the intro can only be compared to an out-of-tune electronic bagpipe.

Downsides aside, the album has a feel that's been disappearing from rap over the past few years. On tracks where the production is more spare and transparent, a unique groove is settled into. Unfortunately, there are only a few of these gems on "Abandoned Language," which may force some fans to abandon listening.