

HIT LIST REVIEWS

notch new album like *Short Stories From Catalonia*.

Larsen was long the bandleader of the Hot Club de Norvège, one of the first non-Gypsy bands to resurrect the repertoire of Django Reinhardt's Quintette du Hot Club de France. Yet this new album steps beyond the boundaries of that music.

Larsen's guitar is backed on this disc by a tight jazz quartet featuring guitarist Biel Ballester, bassist Svein Aarbostad, and drummers Håkon Mjåset Johansen and Olsen Wahlen. Beyond the exchanges with his group, however, the album is very personal.

All of the 14 tunes are Larsen's own, a sort of autobiography in song. They chronicle Larsen's long-running infatuation with Spain, from his inspiration in Salvador Dalí's art to various friendships, including one with guitarist Marcelo Matte, eulogized in Larsen's "Adios Marcelo."

Larsen's guitarwork here runs from smooth and voluptuous to fiery and virtuosic. And his quartet lends the songs a light, airy sound that ideally suits his playing. — **Michael Dregni**



Pin Monkey *Big Shiny Cars*

Back Porch records

I'm a sucker for a good country band with grit. Pin Monkey combines the rootsy rock of The Gourds or Reckless Kelly with vocal harmonies reminiscent of the Flying Burrito Brothers.

Pin Monkey has excellent taste in songwriters; tunes from Matraca Berg, Dolly Parton, Kieran Kane, and others join originals by Pin Monkey's Michael Reynolds and Chad Jeffers. Unlike many new country bands that sacrifice musical honesty at the altar of slickness, Pin Monkey retains its core values. Whether it's Kane's "Mountain Song" or Berg's "That Train Don't Run," its renditions reinterpret the songs in subtle-yet-pervasive ways that retain the emotional power while making them kick. Pin Monkey's original songs, such as the title track, combine the pitiful melancholy of a great honky-tonk elbow-bender with just a pinch of hope. When I listen to *Shiny Cars*, I'm continually reminded of early Flying Burrito Brothers albums, not because Pin Monkey is a clone, but because the band captures the same



Various Artists, *Funk You Very Much* (Inakustik)

An incredible set from "Ohne Filter" television in Germany. "I Got That Feeling" from Albert Collins and Debbie Davies, an amazing "Move On Up" from Curtis Mayfield in 1990, and Larry Carlton from 1984. How about Terence Trent D'Arby in his prime in '87? Fabulous stuff! — **JH**



Sonya Kitchell, *Words Came Back to Me* (Velour Recordings)

Kitchell's voice is a true force of nature. Combine it with her sophisticated artistic sensibility and you have a recipe for killer music — and she's only 16 years old! Twelve original songs, from soul-inflected pop to bluesy jazz. Produced by Steve Addabbo, the carefully polished CD sounds great, too. — **SS**



Frank Gambale, *Natural High* (Wombat)

I've always liked Gambale's guitar playing, but never really got into his compositions and sound. Well, he has solved that dilemma here with a batch of acoustic guitars. The songs are interesting, the playing fabulous, and a distinct sense of playfulness runs throughout (check out "Have You Met Tom Jones?"). A wonderful (mostly) quartet record. — **JH**



The Mammals, *Departure* (Humble Abode Music)

Combining a modern pop sensibility with organic musical honesty, you hear everything from string sections to claw-hammer banjo. The band's ability to unite disparate forms to create fresh amalgamations makes them special among

the young bands trying to create "World Music." Although The Mammals' style is musically inclusive, it still remains a personal and articulate edge. — **SS**



Micke & Lefty, *Big Bag* (Bluelight Records)

Micke and Lefty are Finnish and made their names as part of an R&B band there. This disc is an acoustic tour de force that helps them celebrate the American music they so obviously love. Highlights include the soulful slide of Ville "Lefty Willie" Leppanen. Whether it's an original or a cover of an American blues classic, the fellas got it right. — **JH**



Mark Erelli, *Hope and Other Casualties/Signature Sounds*

(Public Emily) In America, there's always room for a good song delivered straight up. Most of the original songs here dwell on the social landscape of our post-9/11 world. While the lyrics will give you food for thought, Erelli's melodies harbor sufficient hooks and bridges to keep your ears happy. — **SS**



Jack Ingram, *Live - Wherever You Are* (Big Machine Records)

From the fringes of the Nashville scene, this set captures Ingram in his element. Jens Pinkernell plays fine guitar on the live cuts, and folks the likes of Brent Mason shine on a couple of studio cuts. Good stuff for folks who like their country a little rougher than what they may hear on the radio. — **JH**



Lunasa, *Se* (Compass Records)

Perhaps the only Celtic

super-group, on their album they prove Ce be as vibrant and ad as any genre. With t guitarists, Se expands musical palette to include electric slide guitar. this isn't your father's band, but Se may be rhythmic and melodic the arm you long for.



Guided by Voices

names like Alvin, Vo Biller, The Hellcaster Club of Cowtown, D Kings, Rush, Cray, D The Moreells, Smithe and Dale, there are notes here to fill up normal CDs. They're notes, too. Put this next time your Yngv nephew visits... and his adolescent jaw floor. — **SS**



Jessi, *Out of Ashes*

years since her last the former (and see still) country outlav to action with a ren deep, heartfelt colle produced by Don W an all-star cast, fea the ever-tasteful gu Reggie Young, a po collaboration with husband Waylon J (and the song's cor Tony Joe White), a with her son, Shoo triumphant comeb



Wolf Bros./Rhino

It goes saying that everyt first-rate, but tryin the 30-year, 13-alb tory of such a mul talented band in 2

EXTRA!!! EXTRA