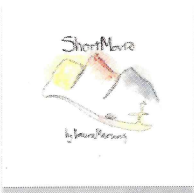


LAURA MARLING

Short Movie

lauramarling.com

The fifth full-length from this 25-year-old British singer-songwriter is billed as several things: her first electric album, her L.A. album, and her reflective “what’s it all mean?” album. True, Marling takes an electric guitar to ruminative lyrics inspired by a sojourn in L.A., but *Short Movie* was cut in London with plenty of acoustic picking, and it’s too long on ideas to be summed up by any tagline description. On many of these tracks—the defiant opener “Warrior,” the softer “How Can I”—she’s still making like major influence Joni Mitchell, doing the high-to-low, sing-speak thing nearly as well as the legend herself. Marling rocks out to drums and scratchy guitar on “False Hope,” on which she sings of neither sleeping nor fitting in, and she chugs ahead with bright, fast strumming on “Gurdjieff’s Daughter,” named for George



Laura Marling

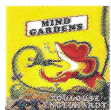
Gurdjieff, the famed mystic behind “the Fourth Way.” Who knows whether Marling goes in for that? On the Dylanesque “Divine,” she finds a peace befitting someone in her line of work: “When the note lingers, sending shivers down my spine / I feel in my fingers that I’m one with something divine.”



ERIC BIBB *Blues People*

[facebook.com/ericbibbmusic](https://www.facebook.com/ericbibbmusic)

The striving materialism and sexual innuendo of “Pink Dream Cadillac,” one of the finest songs on this set of mostly new old-school blues offerings, says a lot about what this singer and guitarist is going for. Born in NYC, now based in Finland, Bibb reveres and romanticizes this music of struggle, humor and hope. If the production is crisp and bright and unmistakably 2014, Bibb’s taut acoustic picking anchors tunes ranging from the poppy, fleshed-out “Chain Reaction” and African-tinged “Home” to the skeletal “Rosewood” in the early 20th century. It’s revivalism—especially that old-timey “Chocolate Man”—but timelessness carries his traditional (“Needed Time”) and neo-trad (“Out Walkin’”) numbers right on down the road.



TOULOUSE ENGELHARDT *Mind Gardens*

toulousemusic.com

When a mustachioed, beret-wearing guitarist from Southern California promises “13 Novelettes of Space, Time and Contemplation”—the subtitle of this disc—it can go one of two ways. *Mind Gardens* goes the right way—and then it goes a million other ways. Engelhardt made his name in the ’60s and ’70s, alongside finger-style kings John Fahey and Leo Kottke, and here, he shows

how mind-blowingly versatile one man with a guitar can be. “Nierika” is a folk-jazz mystery waiting to be solved. “Theme to the First Annual Bluebelly Lizard Roundup” has a frenzied bluegrass feel. “The Wedge” turns surf god Dick Dale’s original into background music for shops that sell dreamcatchers. (Engelhardt’s seems to be working just fine.)



SUBURBAN LIVING *Suburban Living*

suburbanlivingzzz.tumblr.com

Like dream-pop peers Washed Out, DIIV and Beach Fossils, this Philly outfit started out as a one-man project. Onstage, Virginia Beach native Wesley Bunch now fronts a full band, but here on his debut LP, he’s on all the instruments, conjuring up big 20-something feelings with his milky synth tones and crystalline guitars. The album opens with a tune called “Dazed” and ends with one dubbed “Wasted,” and those titles are a pretty good indication of what’s in between: lush, swimmy ’80s revivalism light on discernible lyrics but loaded with implicit yearning and heartache. At 1:23, the dizzy synth sketch “Hotel Unizo” might be the high point. Bunch must have enjoyed his stay.



SKETCHES *Volume Two*

sketchesmusic.com

This is what democracy sounds like. In this Brooklyn jazz quintet, every song is born the

same way: One member brings in a sketch—hence the name—and another turns it into a composition, which the others add to equally. Predictably, *Sketches*’ second album is free of star turns. Part of the fun is putting aside the CD and guessing who’s riffing on whom. “Bibi” starts with rock-like drums and features Matt Holman’s melodic, sputtering trumpet, but it was composed by saxophonist Jeremy Udden and sparked by pianist Jarrett Cherner. High-anxiety highlight “Rub” pits Cherner’s chirping chords against drummer Ziv Ravitz’s snare. Neither sketched nor composed it—they’re two of five guys swept up in something only they could create.



STACY MITCHHART *Live My Life*

stacymitchhart.com

Nashville tourists love this singer and guitarist, and it’s easy to see why. His soul-blues vamping reads “gritty”—this spirited new album features tunes called “I Drink Whiskey” and “Voodoo Doll”—yet comes coated in showbiz varnish. It’s feel-good boogie music, and even “Better Off Dead,” about a drunk who lost everything, is built to keep clubgoers buying drinks and tipping their bartenders. Which is fine, since Mitchhart doesn’t pretend he’s some paragon of authenticity. He’s good with words and better with his big old Epiphone, and he and his band play the blues not *like they used to*, but like certain listeners would like to *imagine* they used to. Sometimes, that’s even better.