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per leaning heavily on the so-called authenticity of his criminal past."

Lead Belly didn't shy away from telling it like it was ... and still is. "The Bourgeois Blues" is about Washington DC. "Scottsboro Boys" is about the 1931 landmark case of nine black youths falsely convicted of raping two white women. "The Hindenburg Disaster," "Jean Harlow," "T.B. Blues," "Blind Lemon" (about his ramblings with the legendary Blind Lemon Jefferson), "National Defense Blues," "Mr. Hitler," "Bellevue Hospital Blues" and "What's You Gonna Do When The World's On Fire" encapsulates his brutal honesty.

A tribute concert is set for Washington DC's Kennedy Center. A new documentary film, "Legend Of Lead Belly," sheds light on his troubled past. The 1976 "Leadbelly" movie (which used the former spelling of his name) told the story of the 35-year prison sentence he received for killing a man with his bare hands in a bar fight over a woman, and his subsequent violent outbursts while in jail which landed him in Angola, historically the worst hell-hole on earth.

Woody Guthrie's Grammy-winning Smithsonian box came out in 2012. A similar package is in the works for Pete Seeger.

— Mike Greenblatt



JOHN LODGE 10,000 LIGHT YEARS AGO Esoteric Antenna (EANTCD 1049 CD)

Justin Hayward may be considered the creative force behind the Moody Blues, but one look at songs written (or co-written) by John Lodge ("Ride My See-Saw," "Isn't Life Strange," "I'm Just a Singer (In a Rock and Roll Band)," "Steppin' in a Slide Zone," "Talk-

ing Out of Turn," "Sitting at the Wheel" and "Gemini Dream," among others), remind us that it is not so.

"10,000 Light Years Ago," Lodge's (bass player and vocalist) second solo album, actually sits well among the great Moody Blues catalogue. Album opener "In My Mind" sets the tone for the album and features studio musician extraordinaire Chris Spedding, whose stellar guitar playing on this song provides a contemporary, yet spacy (even psychedelic), atmosphere reminiscent of Pink Floyd and early Moody Blues. Unfortunately, we're only teased with that progressive rock sound on the opener (and once again on the final album track).

The remaining tracks are more typical of the latter day Moody Blues commercial sound. Highly publicized track, "Simply Magic," featuring the "return" of former Moodies Ray Thomas (flutes) and Mike Pinder (mellotron), doesn't live up to the hype. A nice enough song, but it lacks edge (pun intended). "Love Passed Me By" is a shuffle featuring a violin and accordion sounds like it could be an outtake from Dylan's "Tempest." Although the song seems somewhat out of place on this record, it's a rather good song that stands on its own. Unfortunately, Spedding's adept guitar work is not enough to save the next two songs: "Lose Your Love," a weak, piano-based high school prom ballad, is the worst track on the album. The only saving grace is what comes after it: the epic title track and album finale.

"10,000 Light Years Ago" closes the album in a similar fashion to how the proceedings kicked off. Reminiscent of the classic '60s Moody Blues, the song starts out with a spoken voice narration and transitions into a heavy acoustic and keyboard orchestral masterpiece. As the song finishes, however, I am left only partially satisfied. At just eight total songs (most in the three to four-minute range, and none reaching five minutes) the album falls short. I wanted more songs like the opener and finale. More songs to be able to definitively say that John Lodge is not only a key contributor to the classic Moody Blues progressive rock sound, but also more than capable of writing a complete album of music that is still relevant today.

— Chris Aug

New release from rock-n-roll pioneer Charlie Gracie



"When we were starting out with The Beatles, the music coming over from America was magical to us---and one of the artists who epitomized this magic was Charlie Gracie." —Sir Paul McCartney

Also, new album from Linda Gail Lewis, Summer 2015
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