

Quarternotes

Carolina boy **Lee Sinclair** returns with an outstanding album filled with Southern Rock influenced country that will get you dancing, drinking, and generally having a great time. *High Cotton USA* represents some of Lee's finest songwriting and performing yet, with the country Top 40

deserving "Almost Single," a song Taylor made for today's country rock radio.

There are so many great songs on this album, it's hard to pick a favorite, but I personally love the melodic "Summer Girl," and the pretty "She's a Woman." "Don't Let it Rain" rocks with an early Marshall Tucker Band vibe, from the opening sax to the rocking guitar. Of

course "Lonely Town" also proudly boasts a strong MTB influence. The album is chock full of A-list musicians, including Ronald Radford- himself a former member of The Marshall Tucker Band; Johnny Volianitis; Jeff Smith; Steve Alonzo Walker; Phillip Flemming; Adam Quay; Scott Steele; Kevin Riley; Paul Singh; Mark Blackmon; and Dana Fleming. The album was produced and mixed by Sinclair and Phillip Fleming, and mastered by long time Marshall Tucker guitarist Rusty Milner. To make a long story short, *High Cotton USA* is my kind of album, start to finish, Southern Rock blended with good country music. Don't miss this one, folks....

Silverfish is a seriously rocking band with more than a little Southern Rock influence. No small wonder, since some of the members

used to be in an excellent band called Catawompus. For their debut album, Silverfish rock's with a Christian message, and the result is overwhelmingly positive. Band members include: Jimmy Hamilton on vocals; Douglas Gery on lead guitar; Bryan Graves on

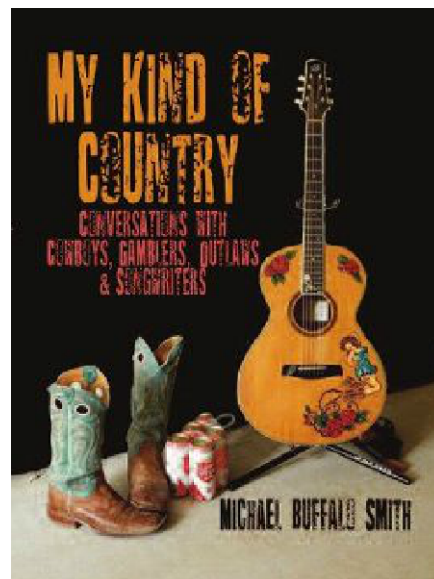
bass; and Jamie Smith on drums. Douglas and Jimmy wrote all of the songs and produced this fine CD. While all ten tracks are excellent, "Celebrate" stands out, as does the rocking "I'm What it Looks Like," and perhaps the finest track on the album, "Love is Everything," that kind of sums up the entire message of the album. Silverfish blend Southern Rock sensibilities with



Christian rock to great effect. Check 'em out.... **The Ann Wilson Thing!** returns with a second red-hot EP, *Focus* (New Rounder). This band, made up of rock veterans all backing the always powerful vocals of Heart's Ann Wilson, is out to have some serious fun, and there sure pull it off. Fun for them equals fun for us. The fun begins with a Jimi Hendrix cover, "Manic Depression," kicking off this four-track EP with a passionate vocal and high energy. The band slows the tempo, but not the energy, with "Fightin' Fer Life," a relatively sparse track, with soft strings underscoring Ann's vocal. "Don't Give Up," originally recorded by Peter Gabriel and Kate Bush, is given an excellent new reading here. *Focus* brings it all home with a semi-swampy "Anguish," an edgier

track, possessing a, dare I say, Southern Rock vibe. I love Heart, but I dig The Ann Wilson Thing! almost equally these days...Have you heard **2 Ton Bridge**? No, its not a song or an album, it's an *artist*. A pseudonym for Alexander Wrights, a man who oozes Americana from every pore. Of course, it's a self titled album, so it could be reasonably argued that it is also an album name. The song writing is simply captivating. At first glance, his photo inside the gate fold of the CD reminded me of Billy Joe Shaver, and as a matter of fact, his voice leans toward Shaver on the rocking "Take Your Hand Off My Land," a great song about the American farmer. Songs like "Post Hole Digger," "I'm a Hoot Owl," and "Pennies On the Shore" only cement the fact that 2 Ton Bridge is a world class folk artist. Check him out. The album is on the Monkee Room Music label...**Brian Langlinais** has a great new record out called *Right Hand Road*, and it is filled with the local color of his home town of Lafayette, Louisiana, filtered through a roadhouse vibe. Langlinais is a fresh, new sounding voice, one that rocks with the same soul-soaked swagger of a Delbert McClinton or a Lee Roy Parnell. The music is blues based, but not in that 'my baby done left me' style, rather in an uplifting, "glass half full" way. Surrounded by horns and off the chain musicians, Brian rocks through "Don't Let the Green Grass Fool you," one of the many highlights of the album. He channels his inner Robert Johnson on "Right Hand Road," and belts out a very nice cover of the r&b classic, "Everyday Will Be Like a Holiday." Good stuff. But then again, so is the whole album. He brought a broad smile to my face with his cover of Brian Setzer's "Maria," a song I have always loved. Get you some...**The Blind Boys of Alabama** have been a fixture on the gospel scene for a whole lot of years, crossing over into pop and other fields from time to time while always remaining anchored to Jesus. Recently Omnivore Records reissued expanded ver-

sions of two classic albums by the Blind Boys of Alabama: 2001's Grammy Winning *Spirit of the Century* and *Higher Ground*, and both are chock full of soul-stirring music, featuring the eternal harmonies of the group, established back in 1944. *Spirit* includes not only classic gospel tunes, but covers of songs by Ben Harper, Tom Waits and even The Rolling Stones ("I Just Wanna See His Face.") The album includes players Dave Lindley, John Hammond, Charlie Musselwhite, Danny Thompson and more. One of the many highlights is "Amazing Grace," sung to the tune of "House of the Rising Sun." Love it. With the reissue, we get to hear seven live versions of the songs from the album, performed at the legendary Bottom Line in New York City. Right on the heels of *Spirit* came *Higher Ground*, another instant classic, this one featuring Robert Randolph on "sacred steel guitar" and his Family Band, as well as Ben Harper. Joining traditional gospel songs are covers of songs by Prince, Aretha Franklin, Curtis Mayfield, Jimmy Cliff and Funkadelic. For their efforts, The Blind Boys won their second consecutive Grammy for Best Traditional Soul Gospel album. Again, we are treated to seven live recordings of the songs from the album. I'm not big on labeling recordings as "essential," however, these two albums by the mighty Blind Boys of Alabama are no less than essential. •



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