



## Reflecting Growth

**K**eb Mo made his first splash as a country-blues artist, and in some quarters is still seen that way. But he's been steadily moving in different directions, and his latest disc finds him mining the veins of soul, blues, rock, pop, and even jazz to make a mature artistic statement.

From the first cut, "The Whole Enchilada," it's apparent there is a lot here to listen to and for. A funky pop tune, it's highlighted by the artist's (whose real name is Kevin Moore) slinky, melodic slide guitar. Soul guitarist David T. Walker supplies backing here, and on most of these cuts, while Moore's

vocals, coupled with a chorus of fine singers, are on the money.

From the quiet soul

always interesting and with a familiar feel.

All are original except a perfect-fit cover of the Eagles' "One of These Nights" that has a quiet, jazzy feel with one of his best vocals. "My Baby's Tellin' Lies," written by Moore and Vince Gill, has an incredible hook, on-the-money vocals from both, and punchy single-note riffing from Moore – quintessential soul guitar.

Moore has created an album heavy on funk and soul that harkens to West-Coast pop from the late '70s/early '80s. And while most albums these days run long, this one leaves you wanting more. – *John Heidt*



**Keb Mo**  
**The Reflection**

Yola Belle International

of "All the Way" to the Steely-Dan-influenced title cut, Moore's guitar is featured, but never in-your-face; his slide work is always tasteful, and his songs include changes that'll make any player smile – never clichéd,

the longest cut on the album, seems purposely over the top; the CD would've held together better without it.

Keeping an all-instrumental album interesting for 45 minutes is no small task, but Louhivuori succeeds. – *DF*



**Chris Thile and Michael Daves**

**Sleep With One Eye Open**

Nonesuch Records

Two guys, two instruments, two voices, and nothing else – the musical equivalent of high-wire walking sans net. But if those two guys are Chris Thile and Michael Daves, the results are far more musically complex and interesting than you'd expect.

The music here isn't strictly bluegrass. Instead, it's a combination of bluegrass merged with old-timey verve along with more than a dollop of modern acoustic jazz. At times, it has an almost ferocious edge, as with their version of "Tennessee Blues." The playing is virtuosic throughout; most of the solos have a "without a net" quality of on-the-spot improvisational brilliance. Even the vocals have their share of pleasant musical surprises, as they merge in a way usually reserved for siblings. On tunes such as "You're Running Wild," they have an almost Everly-Brothers-like melding of their voices. Acoustic music doesn't get any better. – *SS*



**MonkeyJunk**  
**To Behold**

Stony Plain Records

Despite the fact that the U.S. and Canada share the continent of North America, no Yank will endear himself to his northern neighbors by referring to them as "Americans." So, what to call Americana music when there's an increasing number of Canadians (Steve Dawson; the Duhks; Roxanne Potvin) making it?

Perhaps the best course of action is to adopt the approach taken when eating an unfamiliar dish in a New Orleans restaurant; don't worry about what it's called, just dig in and enjoy!

Whatever this trio of Alberta musicians call their music, it has heft in the form of a very satisfying bluesed-up cover of Hank Williams' "You're Gonna Change (Or I'm Gonna Leave)" along with a harmonica-laced piece of Blue Rodeo-/Jayhawks-flavored (but much more sanguine) country ("Running In The Rain") and a Band-like ballad called "All About You." And is it just my imagination, or is MonkeyJunk one of several newer bands who seem to have a bit of Savoy Brown ("While You Are Mine") mixed into their style?

"Americana" became a musical term in part because it refers to music that

borrowed from several genres – country, blues, and folk especially. That used to be called rock and roll.... or, come to think of it, just "music." Led by coproducer/guitarist/harmonica player/vocalist Steve Marriner, MonkeyJunk is very good at making "music." – *RA*



**Henry Gross**  
**Rhymes and Misdemeanors**

**Right as Rain**

Zelda Records

Say what you will about veteran rocker Henry Gross, you can't call him lazy. He has just released two records, each with 21 songs – and virtually every cut has something to offer.

Generally speaking, *Rhymes and Misdemeanors* is the more uptempo of the two. Gross plays rock guitar on "The Truth Is Not For Everyone," which showcases solos as mini compositions beyond simple turn-it-up-and-play affairs. And while he's always melodic, it's especially obvious on songs like "The Best Things in Life," a horn-driven soul/rock tune. There are ballads, especially on *Right as Rain*, and at least a dozen cuts between the two that some enterprising young band could turn into a country hit. Given country radio's pop overtones these days, and the great hooks offered here by Gross, it wouldn't be a stretch to say there are at least a half-dozen potential hits.

The years haven't measurably diminished Gross' vocal talents, either. For a guy whose falsetto supplied the focus of his biggest hit, 1976's "Shannon," his voice has stood the test of time and still shows an amazing versatility that's tough on the rockers and tender on the ballads. – *JH*

## DVDs



**Glenn Tilbrook & The Fluffers**

**Live In New York City**

MVD Visual

Recently, Tilbrook and his writing partner and vocal foil, Chris Difford, have reunited as Squeeze, one of the best pop-rock bands to transition from New Wave to mainstream. During their many breakups, however, Tilbrook continued to record and tour, both as a solo artist and as leader of the four-piece Glenn Tilbrook & The Fluffers.

Prior to this concert DVD, the only video of Tilbrook was *Glenn Tilbrook: One For The Road*, subtitled "The Story Of One Man, Two Guitars, And An RV" – Amy Pickard's charming documentary (featuring plenty of live performances) of Tilbrook's first solo tour of America, during which he opted for a mobile home over Lear jets and roadside campgrounds over five-star hotels.

Here, however, he swaps his acoustic for a Tele-style Yamaha Pacifica and fronts a tight but supple quartet.

Squeeze's original keyboard player, Jools Holland, once said, "When I first met Glenn, I thought he could write songs like Brian Wilson and play guitar like Jimi Hendrix." The latter endorsement may be a tad overenthusiastic, but fans accustomed to hearing "Tempted" over the radio will be blown away by his visceral facility on songs like "Hot Shaved Asian Teens."

As for his songwriting with Difford, the duo no doubt cringed over raves declaring them "the new Lennon and McCartney," but there's a definite nod to British Invasion bands—early Hollies stand out.

From the opening "Annie Get Your Gun," Tilbrook has the New York crowd in the palm of his hand, with many of them singing along—which seems to be more encouraged than merely tolerated when it comes to Squeeze shows.

Fourteen songs later (split evenly between Squeeze material and songs from Glenn's solo albums), the Fluffers encore with "Goodbye Girl," played acoustically, atop the Canal Room's bar. Whether in attendance or viewing at home, everyone gets their money's worth. — **DF**



### Ernie Hawkins

#### Deep Texas Blues: The Early Blues of Lightnin' Hopkins

Stefan Grossman's Guitar Workshop  
When it comes to acoustic blues, Lightnin' Hopkins remains one of the undisputed masters, his aggressive Texas style having a huge impact on future players, most notably Jimi Hendrix. In this two-disc set, blues scholar Ernie Hawkins gives viewers a detailed look at Hopkins' early recordings, breaking down each song so students can learn the subtleties of Lightnin's style. Hawkins also discusses the open tunings Hopkins employed. Each disc contains PDF files of tab for each song.

If you have any interest in rural blues or the roots of blues and blues-rock guitar, this is a great place to begin. It's an inaccurate assumption in the acoustic-blues sphere that all roads lead to Robert Johnson; the genre is far more complex than one Delta blues guitarist, even one as great as Johnson. — **PP**



### Ruthie Foster

#### Live At Antone's

Blue Corn

When Foster arrived in Austin circa 2002, the unknown with a style that seemed fully formed quickly took the town by storm.

No one questioned the powerhouse vocalist's talent, but there's been much

debate regarding how to pigeonhole her. *The Truth According To Ruthie Foster*, her '09 CD, was nominated for a Grammy in the Contemporary Blues field, but at this year's Blues Music Awards she won the "Koko Taylor Award" for *Traditional Blues*' top female artist.

As this 80-minute show demonstrates, she's also comfortable with soul music (the O.V. Wright classic "Nickel And A Nail") and Americana/folk (covering Lucinda Williams and Patty Griffin material). But having grown up in tiny Gause, Texas, singing in church with her family, it's the gospel influence that best defines her—like "Up Above My Head" (highly rearranged from Sister Rosetta Tharpe's version) and "Woke Up This Mornin'."

*Truth* was recorded with a dream team, including Robben Ford on guitar. But her DVD was filmed with her own band, featuring the impressive Hadden Sayers on guitar and vocals. The original "Stone Love" is a swinging shuffle reminiscent of B.B.'s "When It All Comes Down," and Sayers takes a wah-wah solo on his customized Strat (Tele neck, three gold-foil Teisco pickups). This thing is a tone monster—at least in Sayers' hands.

Foster's acoustic is an integral part of the rhythm section, which also includes bassist Tanya Richardson, drummer Samantha Banks, and keyboardist Scottie Miller, whose B-3 adds just the right flavor to the subtle reggae of "I Really Love You."

Sayers' duet with Foster on "Back To The Blues," from his latest (and sixth) solo CD, *Hard Dollar*, is one of the set's highlights, along with Foster's take on the traditional "Death Came A-Knockin'." The former is laid back, the latter wall-shattering—both hair-raising. — **DF**

## Books



### Resurrection of Johnny Cash

By Graeme Thomson

Jawbone Press

Using an unusual but effective format, this book tells the story of Johnny Cash's remarkable musical turnaround.

Acknowledging Cash's travails in the '50s and '60s, it digs much deeper, focusing on a lesser-known but no less remarkable period of his life—his near-disappearance from the charts in the '70s until his re-emergence in the early '90s. Homing in especially on the 10-year period between 1986 and '95, the author relies on dozens of interviews, including conversations with Cash's daughter, Rosanne, as well as Will Oldham, U2's Adam Clayton, and Nick Lowe. The narrative details Cash's sometimes humiliating fall from grace, his struggle with a variety of illnesses, his battles with addiction, his search for direction in his career, the reaffirmation

of his core traits as an artist and a man, and his hugely influential legacy.

Long on research and deep with information, it makes for captivating reading. — **ECS**



### Acoustic Guitar Handbook

By Paul Balmer

Voyageur Press

This isn't the first book devoted to acoustic guitars, but it offers several unique features. More guidebook, it offers the basics of selecting and buying acoustic guitars—maintenance and repairs, tuning, setting intonation, fret repair, adjusting bridges and nuts, troubleshooting, spur-of-the-moment fixes, and basic performance enhancements like aftermarket pickups and more.

The narrative treats different types of acoustics—steel-string, gut-string, resonator, and archtop—with careful analysis of buying and use, including the genre most commonly associated with each. The author also takes a close look at a dozen or so individual instruments, each described and evaluated. This, along with hundreds of photos, sets the book apart and elevates its usefulness.

The popularity of the acoustic never seems to wane, and this book will appeal to beginners and serious amateurs. — **ECS**



### Guitar Heroes of the '70s

By Michael Molenda

Backbeat Books

In this collection of previously published material, *Guitar Player* spotlights interviews and conversations with the great guitarists including Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page, and Carlos Santana, as well as some unexpected names like June Millington, Lenny Breau, and Jose Feliciano.

Many will remember these features and the questions the mag routinely asked, like the brand and gauge of string the artist uses, or type of pick, which are a little out of place today. On the other hand, in an interview from '74, Peter Frampton describes the modified black Gibson Les Paul he would play two years later while recording *Frampton Comes Alive*.

In this way, the book does offer good armchair memories, but also begs the question, "Isn't the *GP* archive available online?" Not really. *GP* has a "vault" on its website, but it's incomplete. — **ECS** **VG**