

and the rest

successes, disasters and
retreads: enthusiasm,
tedium and dismay
noted in passing.

The albums – good (👍), adequate (👎) and bad (👎) – which didn't get the full-length treatment, contributed individually by a selection of our various reviewers covering under the cloak of collective anonymity.

👍 **Fendika Birabiro** (Terp 718752234528). If you think you know what Ethiopian music sounds like, this will give you an entirely fresh perspective. It is folk music, with modern compositions and purist instrumentation; call and response vocals, claps, the single-stringed Masenko violin and the Kebero hand drum. terprecords.nl

👍 **Guy Clark The Best Of The Dualtone Years** (Dualtone 803020178229). The music is marvellous but a two-CD compilation from such a short part of his career is pushing it. Why not buy the complete works? It is only four CDs. www.dualtone.com

👍 **Alan Bell The Cockles** (Greentrax CDTRAX394). Fresh collection of "songs from a time and place" from north-west's veteran songwriter, revisiting old successes and adding some recent compositions. Affectionate, nostalgic and displaying old-fashioned craft, though band arrangements possibly dated, arguably bland, for today's tastes. www.greentrax.com

👍 **Elfin Bow Elfin Bow** (Elfin Bow 131793). Young and talented Liverpool singer-songwriter, musician and artist channels the spirit of Vashti for the post-indie generation. Intelligent and atmospheric acoustic folk-pop, played by a strong supporting cast of musicians including Tom Kitching and Jamie Francis. elfinbow.com

👍 **Martin Newell With The Hosepipe Band The Green Children & Other Poems** (Martin Newell & The Hosepipe Band). Essex-centric Cleaners From Venus poet Newell and venerable English ceilidhists The Hosepipe Band combine new compositions with an original and engaging re-working of the old East Anglian legend *The Green Children of Woolpit*. More of this kind of thing! hosepipebandmartinnewell.co.uk

👍 **Agustín Lara And Alma Songs Of Struggle And Hope** (Smithsonian Folkways SFW CD 40567). Alongside the African-American civil rights movement came the Chicano topical music and agit-prop theatre of singer-songwriter Agustín Lara, El Teatro Campesino and César Chávez's organising efforts through the United Farmworkers, here rendered anew by Lara himself. UK distribution by Discovery Records. discovery-records.com

👍 **Ramblin' Jack Elliott Young Brigham: Bull Durham Sacks And Railroad Tracks** (Morello WMRL 69). Two albums from 1968 and 1970 reissued on one CD. Time has not been kind to this music that would have been better left alone. Contemporary songs of the day are destroyed. Tim Hardin may turn in his grave. cherryred.co.uk/label/morello/

50115). BBC 6Music championed Sinkane delivers a glorious and natural blend of Kraut-rock, soul, Sudanese pop, desert groove and engaging falsetto vocals. The single *U'Huh*, with its North African brass and Onyeabor-esque keys is one of those which works its way under your skin – so gorgeously slinky! www.sinkane.com

👍 **Ondatrópica Baile Bucanero** (Soundway SNDWCD092P). Mario Galeano (Frente Cumbiero) and Will Holland (Quantic) divide time between Bogotá and Isla de Providencia, enlisting some 35 artists to craft an idiosyncratic mash-up of Caribbean-Colombian calypso, reggae-dub and mainland cumbia, palenque and gaita idioms. Chevere! soundwayrecords.com

👍 **Bazar Blå Twenty** (Bazaarpool BazaarpoolCD015). Seven years since the last CD by Johan Hedin (nyckelharpa), Björn Meyer (basses) and Fredrik Gille (percussion). Top players all, their sound, in mostly Meyer-composed pieces, is unusual – dark, veiled and thoughtful, ringing into higher frequencies only when Hedin switches from low-pitched octave nyckelharpa to the brighter soprano. bazaarpool.com

👍 **Xamanek Y Se Fue La Bolita** (Xamanek). Versatile, energetic expat Chilean Belgium-based septet with robust Spanish-language harmonies and a political edge draws liberally from reggae, Gypsy, Andean, nueva canción, Colombian, Dominican, Tex-Mex and pan-Latin genres on this Santiago de Chile studio recording. xamanek.com

👍 **Down Trodden String Band Don't Get Weary** (Bonafide Recordings DTM 011). Quartet from Derbyshire who demonstrate a reasonably good feel for the American string band music they create. Unfortunately their vocals let them down badly. downtrodden.org.uk

👍 **Boreas Stones** (Boreas). Belgian quintet (not the Scottish group of the same name) with gently pleasant set of tunes and songs from Brittany, Sweden, England and originals on accordion, hammered dulcimer, flute, guitar, bass, bagpipe, nyckelharpa, qanun etc. www.vi.be/boreas

👍 **Katie McNally Trio The Boston States** (Katie McNally 888295 45244 1). Young Cape Breton fiddler like many before her moves to Boston and plies her exciting Scots-derived dance music in the company of another fiddler and a pianist. www.katiemcnally.com

Fendika



lade Sadaade (Homerecords 551432). RTBF radio host Didier Mélon brought together Belgian string quartet Quatuor MP4 and Brazilian MPB singer-songwriter-multi-instrumentalist Osman Martins on inventive, pleasurably adept arrangements of variegated Martins originals by Pierre Slinckx; lyric transcriptions in Portuguese and French. homerecords.be

👍 **Yolanda Soares Inspirado Em 'Operas De Amalia' Royal Fado** (By The Music BTM3/2016). Backed by guitarra portuguesa master Custódio Castelo and Welsh harpist Claire Jones, soprano Soares covers classics penned mostly by Alain Oulman, who crafted some of fadista Amália Rodrigues' greatest successes; Portuguese notes and lyric transcriptions. yolandasoares.com

👍 **Various Artists Pan! The Steeldrum Odyssey** (World Village WVF 479117.18). War, international thirst for petroleum, and Trinidadian popular politics gave steel-drum music to the world, per this CD-DVD documentary set, smartly packaged in a profusely illustrated hardcover booklet, featuring Calypso Rose, Mighty Sparrow, Andy Narell and more. worldvillagemusic.com

👍 **Rastko Love, Hate & Twists of Fate** (Vacilando '68 V6825). At times rhythmic acoustic rock with melody and a personal lyric which can get testy, probably born from frustration with present times. Cradled in former indie band The Singing Lions, they've realism and edge whilst Rob Shepherd's banjo adds enough rustic to the grittier material. vacilando068.org

👍 **Omar Rahbany Passport** (RYP). Awesome! 180 musicians, directed by Rahbany, playing his own compositions which range from orchestral Bernstein-type arrangements to Weather Report-style jazz. Omar's Lebanese roots are consistently evident. You may never hear anything with this scope and audacity ever again. omarrahbany.com

👍 **Helsinki-Cotonou Ensemble The Road Is Long – Live At The Savoy** (No Problem! NPM03). The combination of harmonies, drumming and synth pads in the first track of this Benin-Finland collaboration are luscious. But when the lyrics in English come in, it all becomes a bit cheesy. While it sounds like a fun live performance, the horns and rhythm section may be little too hectic for something you want to listen to at home. helsinkicotonouensemble.com