

👉 **Neil Cousin *The Dreams Of Animals*** (Oilbug Music OB014). Fenland-based singer-songwriter delivers sequel to *Bonfires*, his 2011 journey into the essence of the animal mind. Often determinedly oblique, quite gothic and slightly off-the-wall, yet Neil's innate whimsicality can sometimes jar with his admirable subdued bleakness. [neilcousin.com](http://neilcousin.com)

👉 **Various Artists *Projecto Somos*** (BEV007). Well-appointed 76-minute compilation aimed at raising funds for Guatemalan community initiative providing homes for at-risk mothers and children. Equal portion of album cuts and specially donated tracks, artists include Blair Dunlop, Ray Cooper, Jackie Oates, Alistair Russell, thus quality assured. <http://projectsomos.org>

👉 **Ben Smith & Jimmy Brewer *Ben Smith & Jimmy Brewer (EP)*** (Ben Smith & Jimmy Brewer). Togetherness songwriting, voiced in performance by instinctive close harmonies and suitably understated, stylish guitar playing. Likeable enough and with more than a dash of Americana-tinged promise, but yielding little in terms of lasting impression. [ben-smithandjimmybrewer.com](http://ben-smithandjimmybrewer.com)

👉 **The Celtic Fiddle Festival *Storm In a Teapot*** (Loftus Music, LM008). Fifth album in 23 years sees new a line-up. Fiddlers Kevin Burke (Ireland), Christian Lemaître (Brittany), Charlie McKerron (Scotland) and guitarist Nicolas Quémener (Brittany) perform traditional dance tunes and slow airs from Brittany, Ireland, Scotland and Galicia. Likeable, old-timey music. [celticfiddlefestival.com](http://celticfiddlefestival.com)

👉 **Southern Tenant Folk Union *Join Forces*** (Johnny Rock Records JOROCK023). Belated statement to all to stand together following the 2015 election disaster. Not forceful enough to make you think and not melodic enough – except the jiggy bits, well done Katherine Stewart – to make you tap your feet. Something's really missing here; it should work but the whole is somewhat flat without soul. Shame. [southerntenantfolkunion.com](http://southerntenantfolkunion.com)

👉 **Iontach *A New Journey*** (Iontach IONCD 179). Irish/German trio with an added Englishman pursue a thoughtful melodic approach to Irish and English traditional music. A tasteful blend of instrumental dexterity and subtle vocals, this offers an alternative to full-throttle abandon more favoured recently. [iontach.de](http://iontach.de)

👉 **Andino Sons *Madera*** (Creative Saskatchewan 829982–175557). Born of Chilean exiles that fled to Canada after the 1973 US-backed coup against Salvador Allende, Andino Sons (vocal harmonies, guitar, charango, quena, Andean panpipes, percussion) purveys an upbeat blend of Andean and North American folk, reggae, and global strains. [andinosuns.com](http://andinosuns.com)

👉 **Brooks Williams *Brooks' Blues*** (Red Guitar Blue Music RGBM-2-2016). Following over 25 albums' worth of "the fruits of the roots", Brooks now gives us the pure unadulterated roots with brand new 'old school' vox-and-guitar takes on twelve of his favourite blues songs. Masterful and impeccably stylish – and yeah, essential. [brookswilliams.com](http://brookswilliams.com)

👉 **Chris Murphy *Red Mountain Blues*** (Teahouse Records). The liner note says "Original bluegrass, folk and old time fiddle music". It may be, but it is really not that good. Murphy would improve his lot by not singing and concentrating on the few decent tunes he writes. [chrismurphymusic.com](http://chrismurphymusic.com)

👉 **Tenderlore *Tenderlore*** (Tenderlore). Alt-folkers Hayley McDonnell, Olly Lewis and Rob Kitney combine individual songwriting styles in a happy, most likeable, subtly melodic folk-pop concoction woven around able vocal harmonies, sometimes augmented with gently

👉 **Simrit *Songs Of Resilience*** (Simrit 108108108113). Born in Greece, raised in South Carolina and influenced by Mazzy Star and Loreena McKennitt, Simrit's music is, apparently, "entwined with yoga practice". Arresting vocals over keyboards, kora, guitars, drums, cello and electronics. Elegantly produced new-age music with muscles. [simritkauredmusic.com](http://simritkauredmusic.com)

👉 **Caleb Klauder & Reeb Williams *Innocent Road*** (West Sound Music). Oregon duo sing classic country harmonies over an ultra-tight backing combo who channel the spirit of The Drifting Cowboys. Original compositions sit comfortably with George Jones and Buck Owens covers and well-chosen obscurities. Fresh-sounding authentic American music. [calebklauder.com](http://calebklauder.com)

👉 **Jack Blackman *Nearly Man*** (Tuery Tuery001). Third album in and accomplished young singer-songwriter-guitarist takes direct inspiration from a road trip to the Mississippi delta, yet produces a less stripped-down, more creatively overubbed studio soundscape to portray his personal journey into the human condition. Exquisite and impressive. [jackblackman.com](http://jackblackman.com)

👉 **The Changing Room *Names On A Wall*** (EP) (TCR Music TCRM75044). Latest project from prolific teaming of Cornwall-based songwriters Tanya Brittain and Sam Kelly commemorates gardeners-turned-soldiers from the Lost Gardens Of Heligan lost in WW1. Three wistful, poignant, sensitively crafted songs, with title track reprised in Cornish. [thechangingroommusic.com](http://thechangingroommusic.com)

👉 **Mitchell & Vincent *Circling The Square*** (Mitchell & Vincent). Accomplished Dorset/ Somerset duo, Graham Vincent and David Mitchell perform traditional tunes (and three songs) on fiddle and classical guitar, achieving poised and lively refinement yet not always entirely managing to avoid slight dullness despite best intentions. Neat cover design though. [mitchellandvincent.com](http://mitchellandvincent.com)

👉 **Various Artists *The Ultimate Guide To English Folk*** (ARC Music EUCD 2671). Magnificent 35-track compilation (ably masterminded by Jon Boden), both an excellent primer-cum-starting-point for those keen to explore folk, and a feast for the seasoned folk fan. A nigh impossible task, but exceedingly well managed within its brief. [arcmusic.co.uk](http://arcmusic.co.uk)

Claire Lynch



👉 **Amala Resonance** (Amala AMCD 01). Irish/ Belgian duo of guitarist Paul de Grae and harpist Reidun Schlesinger playing music from Celtic and outside sources. Exhilarating duet interplay with deft touches and intriguing material from Irish and European to Playford tunes make for challenging listening. [amala.ie](http://amala.ie)

👉 **John McEuen *Made In Brooklyn*** (Chesky Records 388). Nitty Gritty Dirt Band founder McEuen goes solo again with quite an anaemic record. Thin singing does not suit songs by Johnny Cash, Warren Zevon and Gene Clark. Not as good as the makers evidently think it is. [chesky.com](http://chesky.com)

👉 **Carwyn Tywyn *Tanddwr*** (Venation Records. CALC006) Gentle triple harp playing mixing lively instrumentals with ambient sounds and a whole cart of Welsh trad influences. Contemporary edge is given by the arrival of well-planned keyboards and a boisterous electric guitar on the final track. Overall, pretty tidy. [carwyntywyn.blogspot.com](http://carwyntywyn.blogspot.com)

👉 **Kern *False Deceiver*** (AGACD01-16). Kern is a Louth-based trio with a solid grasp of traditional and contemporary forms. Rich sonorous blending of uilleann pipes and fiddles lift the instrumentals while SJ McArdle's gritty voice and dexterous songs add an interesting extra lustre. [kernmusic.com](http://kernmusic.com)

👉 **Pauline Scanlon *Gossamer*** (Pauline Scanlon). Any fears that Lumiere singer Pauline Scanlon's second solo album would bask in an overproduced rush diminishes with the opening track *The Poorest Company*. Subtle electrics frame her bell-like vocals making performance and choice of material adroitly suitable. [paulinescanlon.net](http://paulinescanlon.net)

👉 **Nua Flow** (Nua 190394568429). Second album from this innovative Toronto folk trio of fiddle, guitar and bodhrán showcases their own original instrumental compositions in the Scottish-Canadian traditional style, displaying their penchant for unusual time signatures, polyrhythms, syncopation and bluesy, country influences. [trionua.com](http://trionua.com)

👉 **Claire Lynch *North By South*** (Compass 4671). Classy offering by Lynch selecting Canadian written songs to highlight her excellent singing. One of those recordings Nashville can produce with ease when they try. Singing, playing and choice of material provide perfect blend. [compassrecords.com](http://compassrecords.com)