

# New Releases

## Short Cuts ... bite-sized chunks of folk

### JOANA SERRAT

#### Dripping Springs

Loose

When Mike Scott of The Waterboys sang about hearing the 'big music' he might well have meant this fourth album from Texas resident (via Catalonia) Joana Serrat. Recorded with the Americana legend Israel Nash in his Plum Creek Sound studio near Dripping Springs (hence the album title), Serrat has created a superb album of windswept, lovelorn and epic loveliness. From the booming My Warring Jacket-like opener, 'Western Cold Wind', via The Sundays-ish jangle of 'Lost Battles', Barcelona's Serrat plays with form – a touch of maraca here, a twang of blue rock and roll there – along with elements of Israel Nash's here Neil Young, but in the end it sounds inevitably like herself. And all the better Dripping Springs is for that. Having released four records in five years, I expect there's a great deal more to come – watch this space.

### SCREAMING ORPHANS

#### Taproom

Self-released

Despite having a name akin to a death metal band, Screaming Orphans are actually the O'her sisters from Co Donegal. The feisty foursome are something of a big deal in their native Ireland, and on the evidence of Taproom, their thirteenth release, we've got some catching up to do on this side of the Irish Sea. From the opening vibrant Ireland's Hour of Need ('Gallant Heroes') to the rousing version of Tin Garra Be (Dú Míle) with its 'shot of vodka' refrain that closes the album, Taproom has something for everyone. There are singalong choruses on 'Home' and 'Follow me up to Calow', the wonderfully perky 'The Humour is on me Now', haunting versions of 'Oh Shamrock!' and 'The Ballad of Springhill', which showcase the sisters' superlative harmonising, and a couple of tunes – 'Mr Kenny's Waltz' and 'Doctor Gilbert's Tale' – where the girls get to show off their musical chops. All in all this is well worth seeking out (and perhaps the other twelve albums while you're at it).

### THE 19TH STREET BAND

#### The Things That Matter

Self-released

When Caolaidhe Davis emigrated from Northern Ireland to the USA in 2005, he went looking for a fiddle player, but he didn't expect to find a wife as well. This six-track, short album is a good taster for what Caolaidhe and Meghan Davis can do, and it put me very much in mind of another husband and wife duo – The Arlenes – with its mix of country, rockabilly ('Long Runs the Fox') and even a couple of klezmer-ish tracks ('It's True What They Say' and 'Set Me Free'). To say that the opening track – an earworm with a nailed-on chorus called 'Jump in the Water' – is head and shoulders above any other track is a reflection of how good that song is rather than a criticism of any of the others, but any more songs of that calibre and they really could be onto something.

### AMELIA WHITE

#### Rhythm of the Rain

White-Wolf Records

It's impossible to get away from the Lucinda Williams comparisons on this latest release from East Nashville resident Amelia White. Especially when the vocal of the excellent opener, 'Little Cloud Over Little Rock', is so similar. But such reductionism would be unfair. *Rhythm of the Rain* is much more than Williams-like. Recorded in the four days between her mother's funeral and her own wedding, there is a level of storytelling detail that's closer to Roseanne Cash or perhaps Mary Chapin Carpenter. The album is dotted with lyrical gems, such as dyed black hair and ear ring feathers/what's gotta put those kids through school/ she's sipping on the fly to keep her cool ('Little Cloud Over Little Rock') that raise it above run-of-the-mill Americana. 'Don't think too much people,' she says at the beginning of the title track. That's difficult with the edge political concerns of 'True or Not'. Thankfully, perhaps, the album ends on a song of hope – 'Let the Wind Blow' written with British duo Mary Duff.

**Jonathan Roscoe**