

**NASHVILLE COUNTRY  
JAMBOREE**  
Nashville's First  
Country-Rock Group  
★★★★



*Shove It Up Your Heart / Lovin' My Way Through Life / The Heart I Offered You / Bring Me Sunshine / One Thing / My Home Town / When I Hear A Sad Song / Young And Foolish / We Must Have Been Out Of Our Minds / The Heartaches That You Give Me / The Best Years Of Your Life / To See An Angel Cry / You Don't Deserve The Pain / New City Limits / I Knew Her When / Tear Drops In A Rainstorm / Night Sounds / A Fifth Wheel / With Your Hand In Mine / How Long Is A Memory*

Producers: Johnny Elgin / Billy Sherrill / William Beasley  
**Yellow Label**  
47:39

Like the *Rare 1960's Country Rock From Nashville* release on the same label, billing Nashville Country Jamboree as "Nashville's first country-rock group" is something of a misnomer. There's not much in the way of country rock here, but because they would use wah wah guitars, electric keyboards and twangy guitars it was considered more rockin' than the sound of Nashville at the time and closer to the records coming out of California, but today it just sounds "very" country.

This is another from the vaults of the Spar label, which specialised in sound-alike recordings of hits of the day as well as releasing records by its own roster of artists. Johnny Elgin, who was in charge of all the country sessions at Spar, had previously been a DJ and songwriter and had hooked up with future songwriting great, Jerry Foster, a few years earlier.

In 1965 they found themselves at Spar as A&R men, producers and recording artists. Although they recorded just one 45 at Spar, they recorded prolifically as The Nashville Country Jamboree.

A perusal of the musicians they had on hand reads like an A-Team recruitment list and includes "Pig" Robbins, Floyd Cramer, Hank Garland, Bob Moore, Charlie McCoy, Grady Martin, Lloyd Green, Pete Drake and Ray Eddington along with many others. Maybe "super co-opertative" would be a better way to describe them?

Nashville Country Jamboree were apparently one of the most successful "franchises" on the Spar label and recorded several albums covering current country standards, but their second album was all original material, and this collection appears to be something of a "best of". Half of the tracks are written by Elgin (and he's some writer!), but also included are covers such as Conway Twitty's *To See An Angel Cry*, the George Jones / Melba Montgomery biggie, *We Must Have Been Out Of Our Minds*, and a dead ringer for Willie Nelson on *Bring Me Sunshine*.

There's no way of telling exactly who is singing lead on what, or which of the musicians is playing on a particular track, but rest assured there is no country rock on here, just plenty of great, and mostly pretty obscure, country. Terrible name for a band – terrific album!

*Duncan Warwick*

**JEFFERSON ROSS**  
**Hymns To The Here And Now**  
★★★★ 1/2



*Ordinary People / Long Gone To Darien / House Of The Lord / Lena Jean Kopinsky / Trying Not To Lose My Mind / Carry On*

*Like Larry Jon / Blanche Dubois Meets Lucille Ball / Seven Hills And Seven Valleys / Ballad Of A D-18 / Hymn To The Hear And Now / The Next Room Over / Court House Bells / Oysters And Beer / Old Blue Jeans / Long Torn Veils*

Producer: Jefferson Ross  
**Deep Fried Discs**  
59:13

Last year songwriter/performer left his adopted Nashville to return to the beautiful town of his birth, Savannah, Georgia, Ross feeling that he and Music City had "evolved in two very different directions". Whilst still liking some of what was being played on the radio he wanted to pursue a more troubadour direction in his work and follow along the path of his scribing heroes, guys like John Prine, Guy Clarke, Townes Van Zandt and so on. In fact his journey back to Georgia and the reasons for going are deftly laid out on the final cut of the album, the bittersweet *Long Torn Veils*, the title poetically referring to the hanging Spanish moss found wispily hanging from trees in Georgia and other parts of the south. Opening with the stark statement "*Goodbye Music City, if you don't get me, that's all right/you may have read me wrong but you taught me how to write,*" the song pithily sums Ross' ambiguous and mixed feelings about Nashville and his subsequent departure.

Readers who have been paying attention may remember Ross' debut album *Azalea* which was reviewed most favourably in this magazine in 2009 and was always going to be a hard act to follow. However, *Hymns To The Hear And Now*, in some ways builds on that album and shows a development and maturity in Ross' writing, and this time around there is wider palate of subject matter - often fascinatingly different and novel - in these songs. Indeed traditional love songs take something of a back seat; perhaps the most overtly romantic and orthodox song is the slow, thoughtful *Old Blue Jeans* a lovely open letter to Ross' significant other in which he compares their love, now mature and confident in itself, to a comfortable pair of jeans.

There is a strong thread of

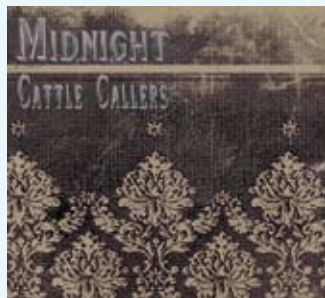
spirituality within the material on offer, most notably the sombre and intense *House Of The Lord* which touches on, inter alia, the birth of the saviour and the story of Anne Frank from the second world war, as examples of the omnipresence of God and that his house need not be grand or lavish - nor yet even a church. The deeply heartfelt title track *Hymns To The Here And Now* is an acapella hymn with, I suspect, Ross himself stacking up all the harmony vocals. With Biblical references strewn throughout, it is very, very Southern and quite remarkable.

There are a couple of co-writes; *Court House Bells* is a folksy and folksy vignette quietly observing life on Independence Day in a small southern town, the other being forceful midpacer *Lena Jean Kopinsky*. This is an usual and leftfield story song about a straight talking tough cookie who never took anybody's mess and whenever Ross is scared and "*wants to walk in someone else's shoes*" and needs courage, he thinks what Lena Jean - and the Devil - would do in the same circumstances. Whether Lena Jean existed or not is a moot point; however we do know for sure that the subject of another song, and another LJ, did live - and, sadly, die, in 2010. Larry Jon Wilson was a quirky and uncompromising singer, like Ross, Georgia born, who specialised in swampy Southern country rock and lonesome sounding acoustic ballads and was one of the best kept secrets of country music. In commercial terms he was never really successful as his contemporaries such as Mickey Newberry, Billy Joe Shaver, Kris Kristofferson were but was revered by his peers none the less. He eventually quit the music business but was cajoled into making a late comeback by supporters and fellow artists alike. (Ironically the B-side of his only chart record was called *Drowning In The Mainstream*.) Jefferson's ode to the his fellow performer is calm and measured and also very touching, one writer pouring out his heart to another.

Another tribute to a real person is *Blanche Dubois Meets Lucille*

CD OF THE MONTH

**MIDNIGHT CATTLE CALLERS**  
**Midnight Cattle Callers**  
 ★★★★★



*Cowboy Dan / Anna Lee / Sugar Daddy / I Bend But I Dont Break / Ramblin' Cat / Lydia / Sometimes You're Lucky (Sometimes You're Not) / Ode To The Wind / Lazy Summer Day / West Texas Bound / When You Are Mine*  
 Producer: Midnight Cattle Callers  
**Big Thicket Records**  
 32.00

Midnight Cattle Callers were formed in 2009, by Seth Sutton, an upright bass player, and Dee Foster, a singer/guitar

player. They are joined by Roger Brown, a former member of Gerry Rafferty's Stealers Wheel. Roger also has played and recorded with Ringo Starr, Link Ray, Freddie Fender, Albert Lee and the Hot Band but is not the Roger Brown (Swing City) who in the 90s was signed to Decca. The final band member is Luke Gitchel who plays jazz box guitar, banjo and mandolin. Midnight Cattle Callers have opened for Wayne Hancock who has said, "What a great f\*\*\*ing band they are". Mr Hancock is right, there is something special going on here. Midnight Cattle Callers are influenced by music from the 1940's and play a mixture of traditional country / western swing. The self-produced album is full of songs which despite sounding old, all turn out to be originals.

The first track is sensational. *Cowboy Dan* is a fast paced song with terrific Telecaster guitar and banjo. It's written and sung by the very talented Dee Foster. With this track alone Miss Foster crashes into

my favourite female country singers of all time list. *Anna Lee*, another fantastic Dee Foster original, has a wonderful country feel, with fiddles and a great melody. Dee Foster's voice indicates that she was born to sing country.

If this band had been around in the 1940's-1970's they would probably have had many hits on the country chart. *Sugar Daddy* sounds like an authentic 1940's track, a toe-tapping trip to an era long forgotten by most people. It has another wonderful vocal from Dee Foster (this is a co-write between Dee Foster / Seth Sutton). *I Bend But I Dont Break* has a bluegrass feel and is sung by Seth Sutton, who, like Dee Foster has huge talent as a singer. Sadly, there are no duets between these two, but hopefully there will be on the next album. *Ramblin' Cat* is another song with a vintage feel, it's a blend of old jazz, with a kind of rockabilly / country feel.

The band sound as though they have been together for decades, not just two years.

*Sometimes You're Lucky (Sometimes You're Not)* finds Seth Sutton back with the vocals and in *Asleep At The Wheel* territory with hints of rockabilly. *Ode To The Wind* features lovely mandolin playing, and is another song written and sung by Dee Foster. It convinces me that she is one of the most important female country singers in the world right now. *Lazy Summer Day*, with its lazy, jazzy feel and slinky vocal, from Dee Foster could have been transported from a dark 1950's nightclub. *West Texas Bound* is pure, real, fast paced country with Dee Foster on the road. Fantastic! The album was over all too soon for me, with the musical perfection of the final track, *When You Are Mine*, sounding like a lost 1940's jazzy / country song. With this incredible debut disc, Midnight Cattle Callers have created an instant classic. However where can the band go next, they can't top this, can they?

Paul Riley

*Ball* but it is of a completely different stripe. The song is actually about Ross' mom, and a beautifully formed, larger than life character emerges. More jollity occurs in *Oysters And Beer*, the album's token western swing cut in which Ross attributes the, ahem, aphrodisiacal qualities of the two comestibles consumed by his parents as reason for his very existence. Also uptempo and fun is the wry and wittily assembled *Ballad Of A D-18* which guitar freaks will tell you is the business when it comes to acoustic guitars. (Elvis had a couple.)

*Hymns To The Hear And Now* is certainly a long and intense listen but with clever mood shifts in the material and tempo switches, never outstays its welcome. Ross' vocals are gentle and understated (once or twice a little lost in the mix perhaps) and there is a solid country support chock full of sawing fiddles, liquid

steel and fret burning dobro. A real achievement and definitely one for those who like their country sharply and intelligently delivered.

Jon Philibert

**THE REDLANDS PALOMINO COMPANY**  
**Don't Fade**  
 ★★★★★



*Call Me Up / Brass Bed / 1879 / Don't Fade / She Rides Home / Settle Down / The Boat / One*

*A.M. / Sleep Song / Sirens*  
 Producer: Alex Elton-Wall  
**Clubhouse Records**  
 41:58

Proving the viability of British Americana, and staking the band's claim as that genre's leading light, this smooth and seductive third outing by The Redlands Palomino Company could well prove their ticket to mainstream acceptance in the UK.

A lot of the appeal lies in the voices of husband and wife team Hannah and Alex Elton-Wall who take turns on lead and backing vocals. Both of their voices have a soft edge that's easy on the ear, his having a lightly lived in world weariness and hers an attractive lost little girl quality.

Tasty support comes from Tom Brown who supplies twangy, jangly and fuzzily grungy electric guitar throughout, and David Rothon, who slices

through the mix on pedal steel, while drummer Dan Tilbury kicks things along on a set of relaxed, mid-pace grooves.

The one weak element is the lyrics. With the exception of historical storyteller *1879*, repeated listens have left me with little idea what the songs are about.

Reading the lyric of the title track, for example, I thought it might be about a dying baby, but the rather upbeat mood of the track suggests otherwise, leaving me somewhat confused.

But a certain poetic opacity could be said to come from the rock half of the country-rock equation. I often don't know what rock songs are about, which is why I prefer the straight forward style of Nashville song-writing. But this isn't a Nashville band, and the fact they aren't trying to be is also their greatest strength, giving them an indie band credibility that will