

Dave's Record Reviews

For the AZ Audio Club Newsletter ~ March 2021

Marshall Crenshaw — **Thank You, Rock Fans!!**

LP, Run Out Groove Vinyl, 2017

Crenshaw's 1982 debut album (self-titled) is something of a rock classic, producing a number of hits with its clean, up-tempo numbers that led to comparisons to Buddy Holly. As his career evolved Crenshaw's music moved to a more individual, layered and complex sound that, while often critically well received, did not do as well commercially. Run Out Groove is an interesting record company that asks music fans to vote on three offered record titles to determine which of three it should remaster and re-release, sometimes with additional cuts. Their products are usually very well produced and pressed, and this LP is a great example. It was cut from tapes of a live 1982 concert, previously unreleased. Crenshaw and his band were touring to promote that debut album, and many of the songs from it are performed here. This album is terrifically recorded and has excellent production that is all too often lacking in live albums. Crenshaw and company are in good form, and come across with the energy and verve that they conveyed in their first and second albums — straight-ahead rock'n'roll. Run Out Groove albums are produced in somewhat limited quantities, but if you can find a copy, don't hesitate.

Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real – **Turn Off the News (Build a Garden)**

LP & CD, Fantasy Records, 2019

This latest album by Nelson and his band seems quite more accomplished than their previous outings, and has garnered more attention and sales. It would be tough to pigeonhole this one into a genre, as it contains and combines elements of rock, country, R&B, folk and probably more. Lukas Nelson (one of Willie's sons) successfully showcases abilities of songwriter, guitarist, and singer. The band is very good too, and this comes across as something of a group project. The songs are solid and intelligent, and are delivered with energy and spirit. They were tracked straight to analog tape, and if there was digital tampering at any stage it is not evident. The end result is very impressive, and is overall sort of feel-good country rock. (Guest contributors to different songs include Margo Price, Sheryl Crow, Neil Young, and Willie Nelson, among others.)

John Prine — **For Better, Or Worse**

Oh Boy Records, 2016

The music world lost a giant of Americana with the passing of John Prine last April, due to complications from COVID-19. His legacy and place in music history is assured by the body of his work that include many classic songs, many covered by other artists. This was, I believe, his next-to-last album, and in theme and content was a follow-up to his 1999 album, **In Spite of Ourselves**. It features 14 Prine duets with various (mostly well-known) female singers, and one solo song by him, none of which were written by him.

The featured vocalists here include the likes of Iris DeMent, Alison Krauss, Kacey Musgraves, Kathy Mattea, and others. While the material is good and the personnel are notable, the production and sound quality are merely so-so. This follow-up album lacks the spark and verve of the 1999 original, and with only few exceptions sadly falls rather flat. Better production would have helped a great deal. If you don't have **In Spite of Ourselves**, go for that one instead.

CLASSICS CORNER

Horslips – **The Book of Invasions: A Celtic Symphony**

Horslips is credited as the first "Celtic rock" band, and this is said to be their best. Their sixth album, it was released in 1976 to reasonable critical and commercial success. A concept album based on the book of Celtic legends by the same name, it showcases traditional themes with modern arrangements and instrumentation. The group's most successful album, it unaccountably failed to vault them into the ranks of superstardom... perhaps it was too good for the masses. Production is adequate but could have been better. It is often available in used record bins, and is worth the coin.

Peggy Lee — **Bewitching Lee**

Peggy Lee was one of the best-known vocalists of her day, and deservedly so. This is Lee at her best, a wonderful collection of "her greatest hits" that anyone with ears and any appreciation for female vocals should enjoy. A classic. Originally released in mono in 1962, it has been remastered in stereo and has seen a number of reissues in both vinyl and CD, including an audiophile version by remastering legend Steve Hoffman. I have three versions, and though I was ready to laud the Hoffman version, the original pressing seems to present better dynamics and clarity on my system.

