

31st May, 2014

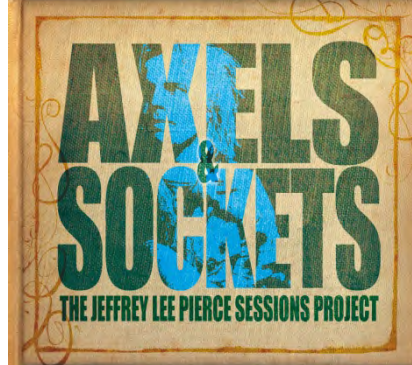
ROCK

Axels & Sockets

Various artists

Planet

4 stars



ONE life was never going to be enough for the creative spirit that was Jeffrey Lee Pierce, so it's fitting that the confetti trail of his unfinished songs has found a reincarnation of sorts with the Jeffrey Lee Pierce Sessions Project. *Axels & Sockets* is the third release in this series and features a telling cast, some of whom appeared in earlier instalments.

The American singer-songwriter has influenced many, but you can measure the impact he had in his time by the calibre of performers from his 1980s heyday with the Gun Club and later solo who assemble here — Nick Cave, Deborah Harry, Iggy Pop, Primal Scream, Mark Lanegan, Thurston Moore ... it's a who's who of the era. Pierce modelled himself on Harry as a young man and was president of the West Coast Blondie fan club. He wrote *Kisses for My President* about Harry. She sings a version of it here with Amber Lights, while Cave teams up with Pop and Moore on *Nobody's City* (Pierce's rhythm guitar track is included). There are 17 tracks on this brilliant album, almost all of them gems.

These songs are taken from demos, unfinished lyrical scraps and undeveloped riffs that have been crafted into successful new shapes. Julie Christensen's *Weird Kid Blues* is magnificent; so too *Constant Limbo (Constant Rain)* sung by Cypress Grove and a host of others. Cave and Harry appear again on *Into the Fire*; Primal Scream gives *Goodbye Johnny* a Suicide feel; and Pierce, who died in 1996 when just 37, makes an encore vocal appearance on *Shame and Pain* with Mark Stewart and Moore.

Peter Lalor

REVIEW OF THE WEEK

By: **NOEL MENGEL**

ROCK LLOYD COLE STANDARDS (PLANET COMPANY) ****

'I'm taking unpaid leave from my women's studies uh-ha,' notes **Lloyd Cole** on Women's Studies, one of 11 richly detailed tunes on Standards.

He goes on: 'I wrote my dissertation on the barstools of your neighbourhood,' while dropping elegant phrases such as 'Bipolar consensus' and 'campus etiquette'. Yet he manages it without sounding like an over-serious poet cutting tutorials to working on his rhymes out in the quadrangle.

He loves language, and did study philosophy and English before graduating to higher praise as a songwriter with 1984's classic with **Lloyd Cole** and Commotions, Rattlesnakes.

Thirty years on, he's in great form. He says he took the quality of Bob Dylan's Tempest album as a kick up the backside before making this album, although in truth releases like Music in a Foreign Language (2003) and Broken Record (2010) had already announced a late-career renaissance.

Last year he even made an electronic album with Krautrock pioneer Hans-Joachim Roedelius. But after the more acoustic nature of Broken Record, Standards features more full band electric work with a cast of players including drummer Fred Maher, Commotions keys player Blair Cowan and guitarists Matthew Sweet and Cole's son William.

It opens with a pulsing rock cut, although California Earthquake turns out to be written by bluegrass and folk innovator, the late John Hartford (best remembered as author of Gentle on My Mind). Perhaps it is another indicator of the 'standards' Cole is alluding to in the title. That song sets the bar high and the 10 Cole originals that follow soar up to that mark.

Period Piece, like several of the tunes here, feels as if cut from the same high-grade cloth as the tunes on Rattlesnakes, with its jangling guitar and crisp turn of phrase ('It was my austere demeanour defined the age' rolls nicely off the tongue, for example). Myrtle And Rose reflects on a broken relationship ('Lost will be the souls of the wanton and the weak'), while Opposites Day cranks up the volume and Blue Like Mars is a power-pop treat with killer guitars, presumably courtesy of Sweet.

But pick of the bunch is Kids Today, a tale which spins off the history of the generation gap ('What is this noise?/How are we to tell the girls from the boys?'). Whatever the generation, we all need something to rage against, he concludes.

In Cole's case, it's a rage against the dying of the light, emphatically delivered on Standards.

Cole plays Brisbane Powerhouse, July 10; Soundlounge, Gold Coast, July 11; Star Theatre, Lismore, July 11.

MAY 31-JUNE 1, 2014



GYPSY Adrian Raso & Fanfare Ciocarlia

DEVIL'S TALE (ASPHALT TANGO/PLANET)

★★★★☆

When Romania's Fanfare Ciocarlia came here for the 2009 Sydney Festival, their flair and ebullience was rather overshadowed by the extraordinary guest singers with whom they shared the stage. For this album they have wisely pursued the same philosophy of largely being accompanists rather than the main event. The guest this time is Adrian Raso, a brilliant Canadian guitarist operating in the Gypsy swing tradition of Django Reinhardt. All Gypsy music has indelible overlaps, whether from the Balkans, Spain or Belgium, and the 12 Romanians have no trouble bending their traditional 2/4 oompah rhythmic sense to the more lithe and flexible grooves of many of Raso's compositions. The end result is no shotgun marriage, but music that plays to the strengths of both parties. The brass-heavy Fanfare Ciocarlia can bray, swagger and bluster in the best tradition of the Balkans, while Raso overlays slippery solos of striking lyricism. He also takes to the banjo for some pieces, which sings a bright song all its own against those many cheerful horns.

JOHN SHAND

MAY 24-25, 2014

spectrum



JAZZ/LATIN **Danilo Perez**

PANAMA 500 (MACK AVENUE/PLANET)

★★★★★

In 1513, Vasco Nunez de Balboa crossed the Isthmus of Panama from the Atlantic Coast to make the startling discovery that the Pacific lurked on the other side. Five centuries later, the brilliant Panamanian pianist Danilo Perez has created a suite celebrating that pivotal piece of Latin American history. Fittingly his suite is a realisation of hitherto unexplored musical territory. Perez, best known as a member of Wayne Shorter's stellar quartet, has interwoven elements of Latin, jazz, classical and indigenous Guna music to enthralling effect. His collaborators are exceptional, including his colleagues John Patitucci (bass) and Brian Blade (drums) from the Shorter band, and an alternative rhythm section of Ben Street and Adam Cruz. Perez's exquisite incorporation of violin (Alex Hargreaves) and cello (Sachi Patitucci) highlights an elegance that is native to his composing and piano playing, and that contrasts with the much earthier Guna percussion and vocal contributions. There's a real sense of an exploratory journey. Outstanding.

JOHN SHAND



COUNTRY Various Artists

YOU DON'T KNOW ME: REDISCOVERING EDDY ARNOLD
(PLOWBOY/PLANET)



Eddy Arnold was new to me when I picked up this album, which says more about me than him given he outsold Hank Williams in the 1950s, wrote hits into the 1970s and had almost as many hits as George Jones. I'm guessing I'm not alone though so there's both sense and imagination in having this tribute album take some unexpected routes, whether it be the Nashville alt.everything ensemble Lambchop shedding any irony, former New York Doll Sylvain Sylvain bringing a lower east-side cabaret, or the Pixies' Frank Black making a kind of land-based sea shanty. It's not a case of being weird for effect, though. The songs are given respect and usually feel natural and connected to the past, if a bit edgier than anything the smooth Arnold would have done. Bobby Bare Jr takes firm hold of *Make the World Go Away* and Mary Gauthier tightens up *You Don't Know Me*, while Jason Isbell puts some sad ache into *Johnny Reb, That's Me*. It's a very fresh-sounding history.

BERNARD ZUEL