

CD REVIEWS THE NEW RELEASES

The Orbitsuns

GIVE THE ORBITSUNS WHAT THEY WANT

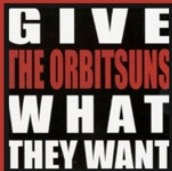
Self-released

★★★★

Detroit country music (sort of)

From the opening squeal of slide guitars set against a wailing police siren on *Detroit Cold*, you know where this album is going. The kings of sleazy rock and country, led by alt-rocker VinDombroski, are off on another rampage. The Orbitsuns' Detroit sound isn't unlike that of Missouri band the Bottle Rockets mixed with that of the North Mississippi Allstars, rock that slurs into country, music that tries to give the impression of being artless but which is actually quite masterful. Various tracks also hark back to the latter, hard-rocking days of the Beat Farmers.

The term cow-punk has been bandied about but it's more (or less) than that, lurching, growling American music where guitars, exuberance, pedal steel and good tunes join together. This album is a free-wheeling step on from last year's *FIRST DRINK OF THE DAY*, with two new guitarists, not least Jackson Smith, son of poet-rocker Patti and the MCS's Fred (Sonic) Smith. The rip-roaring pace on songs such as *Long Walk With The Devil* is tempered only slightly by the country feel of *Whiskey Prayer*, while *Don't Let Sunday Morning Wreck Your Saturday Night* speaks volumes. A superb record that grows with every play. **Nick Dalton**
www.orbitsuns.com



Wonderland • WONDERLAND • Mercury Records • ★★★★★

New five piece female vocalist group put together by Louis Walsh and a member of Westlife... however, don't let this put you off. If you're a fan of Taylor Swift and Lady Antebellum welcome to Wonderland!

Wonderland are the Irish/British female vocal group for which extensive auditions were held in 2008, and the band line-up was confirmed to feature Jodi Albert, Sharon Condon, Corrina Duran, Leigh Learmont and Kacey Smith. Their debut single *Not A Love Song* was released in February 2011 in Ireland and in March in the UK. The second single *Starlight* was released and it was revealed that the girls had signed a six figure record deal with Mercury.

Not A Love Song is a sweet, powerful and pop-laden tune that heads this release. Having received quite a lot of airplay now, it's a song many people will recognise and with its five part harmonies and attractive chorus it's no surprise that they're marked up for big things this year. *Starlight* is the second single and featuring a sweeter sound, it's less likely to make as much of an impact on the pop world, but much more so for those who appreciate a good song. *Nothing Moves Me Anymore* is set to be the third single and its acoustic and laid back vibe, is much more *Maverick* material. *Need You Now* was instantly recognisable as Lady Antebellum's hit song and I'm not so sure whether the female harmonies pose a threat to Lady Antebellum's success.

In Your Arms was co-written with Mark Owen of Take That, and the record also features *Rolling In The Deep*, Adele's hit song, alongside *When Your Stars Go Blue* by Ryan Adams. Though in songwriting terms it's a bit of a sad endeavour,

the songs themselves are well-written, and though many borrowed and the two songs that the girls can be credited for *Not A Love Song* and *Time Has Run Out* are impressive. However, my standout tracks on the record are definitely *Why Here Why Now* an intriguing and anthemic track and *Get Your Boots On*, a fun-loving mix of storytelling with a pop-country vibe. Definitely worth a go if you appreciate the likes of Taylor Swift and Lady Antebellum. I for one really enjoyed it! **Laura Bethell** • www.wonderlandofficial.com



Zarbo • ZARBO • Tune Records • ★★★★★

Has a mean streak to it

This duo from Brighton comprise Andy Heath and Paul Bishop who, between them, are responsible for playing a variety of instruments such as banjo, Dobro, kazoo, harmonica and even the foot drums. To say this duo is not talented would be an understatement.

Matraca Berg

THE DREAMING FIELDS

Dualtone 80302-01531-27

★★★★☆

Nashville's finest delivers her best collection so far

I've long rated Matraca Berg as one of the finest female songwriters and singers currently working in Nashville. Over the years she's provided country music with a whole string of left-of-centre country hits recorded by Deana Carter, Kenny Chesney, Patty Loveless, Trisha Yearwood, Suzy Bogguss, Reba McEntire, Tanya Tucker and others. A somewhat reclusive performer, her albums tend to be few and far between, but always the wait is well worthwhile and this newest collection could well be the best yet. Nine of the eleven songs were included on the gig-only release *SOUTH OF HEAVEN* that Matraca had with her for the Wine, Women & Song tour of last year, but only a few hundred of those were pressed up and sold. This album tends to flow and hold together better as a collection.

The songs all written or co-written by Matraca are beautiful, timeless pieces of art. These finely crafted and intoxicating songs feature both complex and simple orchestrations and unforgettable lyrics. *If I Had Wings*, which opens the album was co-written with Jessi Alexander and is indicative of the themes here of love lost, love yearned for, love gained, and love put on hold. That is followed by *You And Tequila*, a co-write with Deana Carter and is vastly superior to the Kenny Chesney hit version. *Racing The Angels* features Gretchen Peters and Suzy Bogguss (who share writing credits with Matraca) and is a powerful song with absolutely exquisite harmonies. *Silver And Glass* ups the tempo just slightly ... burning and blazing, enveloping the listener and drawing one into the story. The gorgeous title song based on Matraca's grandparents farm is the most emotional song on an album full of them. With just piano and cello accompaniment, the lyrics are given the freedom to really connect with the listener and Matraca turns in her most personal and heartfelt vocal performance. She really sings from her heart and bears her soul. A song you cannot help but keep returning to. Music like this needs to be treasured not just by the few, but by the masses. Sadly, that is unlikely to happen. It is albums like this that re-enforces my belief that great music is still being made today despite the old fuddy-duddies who still believe that good music died years ago. **Alan Cackett**

www.matracaberg.com



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