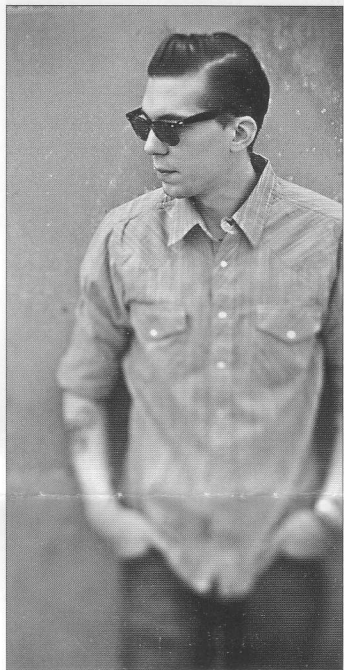


cially ground-breaking in terms of Afro-Latin fusion music, the feeling of joyful exuberance does come through loud and clear. (PEC)



Justin Townes Earle - fields of good pine

Justin Townes Earle *The Good Life* [Bloodshot BS 151 (2008)] Overdosing five times before the age of 21, Justin Townes Earle inherited the hard-living ethos of his father, singer-songwriter Steve Earle. But, as his debut solo effort, *The Good Life*, shows, that's not all that the 25-year-old ex-guitarist/singer of bluegrass/ragtime band the Swindlers and rock band the Distributors has gotten from his dad. Produced by R.S. Fields (Billy Joe Shaver, Sonny Landreth), with Earle's vocals accompanied by Cory Younts (banjo, mandolin), Pete Finney (pedal steel), Bryn Davis (bass), Bryan Owings (drums), Skylar Wilson (keyboards) and Josh Hedley (fiddle), the album reveals a writer of songs whose maturity far surpasses his chronological age. Taking a sparsely arranged approach that owes much to Hank Williams Sr. and to his namesake, Townes Van Zandt, Earle takes an emotionally revealing look at failed relationships and misadventures. "Lone Pine Hill" views war from the perspective of a Civil War soldier. Hopefully, Earle's addictions are behind him. With the potential shown by *The Good Life*, his future looks bright, indeed. (CH)

Roy Buchanan *That's What I Am Here For/Rescue Me* [BGO BG0CD806 (2008), reissue] This

two-fer CD comprises tracks from albums released in 1974 and 1975, respectively, from the guitarist who rivaled contemporaries Hendrix, Clapton, and Allman in skill and reputation, if not fame. Both albums feature completely separate bands, with *That's What* being a four-piece rock set-up and *Rescue Me* (released as *In the Beginning* in the United States) employing another four-piece augmented with the Memphis Horns, keyboards, back-up singers, and more, for a full-on soul session, including the Fontella Bass title track, Al Green's "I'm a Ram," and Joe Zawinul's jazz tune "Country Preacher." *That's What* is more old-school, but smolders with blues passion, and features an uncharacteristic freak-out guitar solo on "Hey Joe." Buchanan, who couldn't sing much himself, wisely hired soul belters to do that for him on both albums. Sadly, BGO didn't or couldn't do much with the sound, which retains a flat, 8-track-ish, 70s mix. Luckily, the grooves are incendiary. (JRL)

Selsølåter *Låter fra Selsø* [GO' Danish Folk Music G00408 (2008)] The Danish group Selsølåter is led by fiddler/composer Svend Erick Pedersen, whose music is inspired by the beauty of the Selsø Lake region west of Copenhagen. His compositions draw upon traditional Danish, Nordic, and Irish influences, and the result is a brash, loud, swinging style with three fiddles, acoustic bass, guitar, and drums. The polskas and reels come fast and furious, with great swells of fiddle, rhythmic drums, bits of eclectic guitar, and Hammond organ popping up in unexpected places. Only a couple of its 15 tracks clock in at over three minutes, and the entire collection is only 35 minutes long. But with music this fun and



Selsølåter - unexpected clock collection

exciting, it is a case of "less is more." (JLe)

The Amity Front *Border Towns* [self-released (2008)] There's a hint of Western vistas in the music of this Massachusetts band of young Americana devotees — the music stretches out and lopes along, but still gallops when unleashed. Still, the Amity sound isn't all "country" or "Western." The slide guitar brings a bluesy vibe and Lyon Grauly's clarinet especially colors the band's sound. It brings a jazzy patina, of course, but the way he plays it is just somehow "old fashioned" in a way that makes the songs sound like faded sepia-toned photographs, if that makes sense. (JRL)

Olla Vogala Marcel [homerecords. be 4446043 (2008)] Olla Vogala is the brainchild of violinist/composer Wouter Vandenabeele, who is also a member of the band Ambrozijn. It's a bit difficult to describe the sound of this long-running (10-plus years) group; to say it's diverse isn't doing it justice. With 12 musicians (violins, viola da gamba, accordion, piano, sax, trombone, trumpet, Dobro, double bass, and percussion) and two vocalists, there's lots to work with, and Vandenabeele makes use of them all. The music, not surprisingly, is a diverse mixture of folk, jazz, classical and fusion themes. The album relates the story of Marcel and the summer of 1907, when he fell in love and became obsessed with fish (seemingly a common theme with the band, as a fish graces the cover of each of its five recordings). The plot really doesn't matter, as it's the music that's important, and it's intriguing and adventurous in its own way. Think of this as a move soundtrack to a foreign film, and you'll do just fine. (JLe)

Patsy Cline *Showcase/Sentimentally Yours* [BGO BG0CD798 (2008), reissue] Every great vocalist has imitators and sound-alikes, but one would be hard-pressed to find anyone similar to Patsy Cline, the original country queen of the love-gone-bad ballad. "Walkin' After Midnight," "I Fall to Pieces," Willie Nelson's "Crazy," "Half as Much," and Hank Williams' "Your Cheatin' Heart" are but a handful of the "he done her wrong" songs that Cline turned into American standards. You might say she was a bit of a musical whiner, but she whined magnificently, with her velvety alto punctuated by vulnerable vocal catches just bordering on sobs. Ironically, her voice was so powerful that it undercut her status as lovelorn victim; you knew she was going to be all right. Her songs were undoubtedly a breakup and unrequited love staple for millions of girls in the 1950s (the boys would get Roy Orbison a few years later), and what a worthy social contribution. The two CDs combined on this disc include Cline's greatest hits as well as popular songs of the era with a sentimental cast. (CM)

Introducing Perunika Trio *(Bulgarian Living Traditions: Haunting Acoustic Harmonies)* [Introducing/World Music Network INTRO109CD (2008)] Three women of Macedonian descent decided to break away from the London Bulgaria Choir in late 2005 in order to form a trio named after Perunika, the mythological Slavic patroness of maidens and eternal youth. Because of oppression by the Ottomans, the Bulgarians' main musical outlet became their voices and, accordingly, instrumentation is limited to only a tarabuka drum and a kaval flute on a few tracks. A few songs, such as "Bre Petrunko" for example, will sound familiar to fans of Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares, but the trio's renditions tend to be lighter and more elegant in tone. The emotions expressed are wide-ranging and the sophisticated vocal arrangements impressive. (PEC)

Various artists *Ireland in Quebec* [Talencourt Musique TM2008 (2008)] This is a collection of 18 songs and tunes from the communities of Valcartier and Shannon in rural Quebec. The towns were settled in the early 19th century, mainly by people from Ireland. Jimmy Kelly and Keith Corrigan, the musicians featured here, have names that bear