

TD's Top Ten of 2013

My favorite album of the year was *Treinta Dias* by La Santa Cecilia, the heart and soul of LA. This scrappy combo has really burst onto the national scene this year with a viral video, major label release, and (God Forbid) even a feature article in the Wall Street Journal. But don't let that put you off! They haven't sacrificed their street cred in my book...they've just become too famous to officially make this list, which celebrates my somewhat more obscure favorite releases of the year. Other faves too high profile to be included in this list that shouldn't be missed are Blues Masters Buddy Guy (*Rhythm & Blues*), James Cotton (*Cotton Mouth Man*) and the Tedeschi Trucks Band (*Made Up Mind*). Smokin!

Here's my official list for 2013, in alpha order:

Boxcar Lillies, *Sugar Shack* (self released) www.boxcarlillies.com

From the Pioneer Valley of Franklin County in Western Massachusetts come the spine tingling and innovative three-part harmonies of these three ultra-talented 40-something singer-songwriters. If you're a fan of the country-folk blend of Blame Sally and Red Molly, you're going to love this one. You'll marvel at the superb musicianship in addition to the terrific songwriting.

Quinn De Veaux & The Blue Beat Review, *Originals* (self-released) www.QuinnDeVeaux.com

Sweet Soul Music reminiscent of the early days of the Memphis sound. An extraordinary East Bay talent who's finally starting to get the recognition he deserves. He's got the whole package... charisma, voice, guitar chops, original material and a tight ensemble, including backing vocals from the gorgeous Quintettes. Do yourself a favor and check this one out, as well as his earlier release *Under Covers*, a great covers collection. If you'd like more of a classic Motown flavor, give a listen to *Lady* (despite cheesy album art) at www.truthandsoulrecords.com It's a real hidden gem outta Brooklyn.

Stephen Espaniola, *Ho'omaopopo* (Shego Records) www.shegorecords.com

Raised in Aliamanu, Hawaii but now living in the Bay Area, this talented multi-instrumentalist has put together a captivating collection of traditional and original Hawaiian *mele* that is balm for the soul. The album title means "to understand," and you will. Another Hawaiian favorite from the past year is from **Kahele**, entitled *He Lei Kahele No Ke Ala* (take a lei wherever you go). You can order both (and check out other outstanding Island artists) from *the source* for Hawaiian music, www.mele.com

Sallie Ford and the Band Outside, *Untamed Beast* www.sallieford.com

Out of the *überhip* music scene of Portland, OR comes this burst of visceral rock n' roll energy. Untamed beast, indeed! Visualize a creative blend of Chrissie Hynde, Annie Lennox and Janis Joplin backed by a twangy combo.... Ms. Ford also plays a mean Fender Jaguar guitar ... my prototype Rocker Chick for the 21st century. Cuts like a knife! Needless to say, this deserves to be played at maximum volume!

Rebecca Frazier, *When We Fall* (Amtwo/Compass Records) www.rebeccafrazier.com

This is the long-awaited solo debut from the first woman to appear on the cover of *Flatpicking Guitar* magazine. This is a healing album, inspired by the death of a son, but it's by no means subdued. Her

singing is reminiscent of Alison Krauss, and her guitar playing simply burns down the house. Somewhere in Hillbilly Heaven, the craftsmen who built her 1935 Martin D-18 are surely smiling at what they accomplished. Recorded in Nashville with a crew of stellar backup musicians.

Bassekou Kouyate & Ngoni ba, *Jama ko* (out here records) www.outhere.de

The title means “big meeting of people,” and it was truly a special gathering that surrounded this Malian ngoni master for the creation of this recording. It was a devastating time in Bamako, the capital, as a military coup was taking place and the country was plunged into civil war. But the spirit of this incredible music transcends and transports. Features the golden voice of Kassé Mady Diabate. Not to be missed!

The Strypes, *Snapshot* (Universal Music) www.thestrypes.com

Remember the rush you felt when you first heard the early Beatles or Stones blast out of your radio? Perhaps I’m just nostalgic, but I got the same kind of high upon hearing these precocious lads from Cavan, Ireland. They bring the sheer joy back to rock, and they can also play! Like the early Stones, much of their repertoire has been blues classics, but their original tunes really shine. Catch them now before they become the “next big thing.” This album is already racing up the charts in the UK. Sizzlin!

Lynn Miles, *Downpour* (self-released) www.lynnmiles.com

I’m always delighted to discover a new favorite artist, and I don’t know why it’s taken me so long to find out about her... perhaps because she’s Canadian? I stumbled onto one of her earlier albums in the bin at Amoeba SF earlier this year, and I highly recommend you listen to all her recorded work. This happens to be the latest. Inspired by a breakup, she turns it into powerful art *a la* Rosanne Cash with *Interiors*. She is simply a superb singer songwriter who belongs in a class with Kim Richey, Patty Griffin, etc. Enjoy!!

Joyce Moreno, *Tudo* (Far Out Recordings) www.faroutrecordings.com (gateway for Brazilian music)

This is the first studio album in 10 years featuring all original compositions from one of the living legends of contemporary Brazilian music. She personifies “cool.” Looking for something a bit different? This’ll put you in an entirely different frame of mind... relaxing on a veranda overlooking Ipanema beach in Rio!

Berence Whitfield and the Savages, *Dig Thy Savage Soul* (Bloodshot Records)
www.bloodshotrecords.com

And now for something *completely* different. These 80’s Boston legends reunited in 2011 and I’m told they must be seen live to fully appreciate the power of their “sweaty, primal soul.” I truly believe that, but this recording is the next best thing. Mr. Whitfield is a full throttle soul screamer, and if you can sit still while listening to this, it’s time to have your meds adjusted. To be enjoyed at maximum volume!!

Lagnaippe

Chastity Brown, *Back-Road Highways* (Creative and Dreams Music Network)
www.ChastityBrownmusic.com

The only thing keeping this from topping this year's list is its late 2012 release date. This is Deep Soul music with Tennessee roots presented in a folk/rock format (picture Tracy Chapman or Joan Armatrading). She pours every ounce of her life and feeling into her music. Why isn't this young woman a major star? Essential listening!

Kobo Town *Jumbie in the Jukebox* (Stonetree Records/Cumbancha) www.stonetreerecords.com

Hipster update of Trinidadian calypso music for our times. Like the great Calypsonians of his birthplace in Port-au-Spain, Toronto-based songwriter Drew Gonsalves constructs incisive social commentary with humor, panache and unforgettable rhythm/melody combinations. Just try to remain stationary listening to this!

The Lions, *This Generation* (Stones Throw Records) www.stonestrow.com

Do you miss Toots-style roots reggae like I do? No problem, man. It's now happening in LA, personified by this second release from a collective of a dozen local reggae luminaries. A skankin' good time to be had by all! I find this to be perfect driving music.

As always, let me encourage you to patronize your local independent record store, if you're lucky enough to still have one nearby. Otherwise, I strongly encourage you to buy music from the artists themselves via their websites or from special portals such as mele.com or cdbaby.com. Let's keep this industry alive!

Happy Listening!

Tom David

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