

T.D.'s Top Ten for 2002

While it was something less than “prime time” in many respects, 2002 was a great year for music. My favorite album of the year was Good Morning Aztlán by Los Lobos ... a true gem that bears repeated playing at high volume. Seeing them perform live with Quetzal at the Mountain Winery, a beautiful outdoor venue above Saratoga, CA was a highlight of our year. There were also superb releases from old faves like Bonnie Raitt, Jackson Browne and the late George Harrison as well as new faves like India.Arie, Kim Richey and Nickel Creek, but those discs all got too much attention to make this list, which celebrates slightly more obscure artists you might not have heard... but richly deserve a larger audience. They are listed in alpha order.

Caitlin Cary While You Weren't Looking (Yep Roc Records) www.yeproc.com
Former member of Whiskeytown steps out with a stunning solo debut, featuring Celtic-tinged contemporary folk/alt.country tunes that are highly melodic and memorable.

Bill Frisell The Willies (Nonesuch) www.nonesuch.com
The latest masterpiece from this genre-busting, singular artist. Traditional melodies are the departure point for an extended tonepoem that only impresses you more with repeated listenings. Ignore the truly terrible album art. If you missed last year's Blues Dream, it's highly recommended as well. Filed under Jazz.

Keoki Kahumoku and Herb Ohta, Jr. Treasures of Aloha (Roy Sakuma Productions) www.ukulele-rosakuma.com
Hawaiian sunshine for a winter's day. Lovely contemporary and traditional melodies, mostly sung in Hawaiian with some virtuoso ukulele work and understated slack key picking.

Kinky Kinky (Netzwerk America) www.netzwerkamerica.com
And now for something completely different... from Monterrey, Mexico, a demented fusion of funky guitar licks, electronic beats, housey grooves and stomping electro rock. High energy! Smokin! Filed under Latin Rock, but that doesn't begin to describe it.

Willie King and the Liberators Living in a New World (Rooster Blues Records) www.roosterblues.com
Blues with a feeling... and a political edge. A veteran of the Delta juke circuit and community organizing with the Highlander Center, only recently “discovered,” Mr. King doesn't indulge in guitar pyrotechnics. Instead you get the unvarnished truth ... and definitely the most delightfully funky album cover of the year.

Tift Merritt Bramble Rose (Lost Highway) www.tiftmerritt.com
Another outstanding debut recording from a young woman with a gorgeous voice who just happens to write some of the most beautiful melodies in an alt.country vein that you're likely to hear... with some Stones influences here and there to spice things up. A big favorite around our house.

Orchestra Baobab Specialist in All Styles (Nonesuch) www.nonesuch.com
Straight outta Dakar, Senegal. Last year's rerelease of their 70's vintage collection Pirate's Choice has led to the group reforming and this outstanding effort. Imagine Afro-Cuban rhythms and themes interpreted from the African side of the Atlantic (including guest spots by Ibrahim Ferrer). Not to be missed!

Quetzal Sing The Real (Vanguard) www.vanguard.com
First recording from a multi-talented group of young artists from East Los Angeles. Tasty musicianship and an infectious upbeat vibe built on traditional Mexican music (most lyrics are in Spanish) but the joyous message is universal. Try to sit still while listening to this one, I dare you!

Virginia Rodrigues Nós (Natasha Records) www.rykodisc.com
The second release from this phenomenal protégé of the legendary Caetano Veloso (who guests on the album). Deep Brazilian soul personified. If you're a fan of Cesara Evoria, check out Virginia. Powerful music from the heart for late nights and long drives on rainy days.

(over)

The Derek Trucks Band Joyful Noise (Columbia) www.derektrucks.com

Yes, he's the nephew of Butch, and when the slide caresses the neck of the Les Paul, you'd swear he's channeling Duane himself. But there are also excursions into Latin and Jazz territory as well. Keyboardist Kofi Burbridge plays a mean Hammond B-3 and wrote most of the tunes. Guest vocals by the likes of Solomon Burke, Rubén Blades and Susan Tedeschi.

Lagniappe

If you have a hankerin' for yet more honest country blues, check out

Precious Bryant Fool Me Good (Terminus Records) www.terminusrecords.com

Just the woman and her amplified acoustic guitar ... recorded live with no overdubs...but that's more than enough. "A Georgia musical treasure." You'll find yourself humming these tunes for days afterwards. "Keepin' it real" is all she does....