

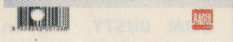
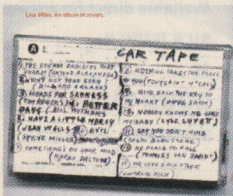


THE ALTERNATE HIGHWAY

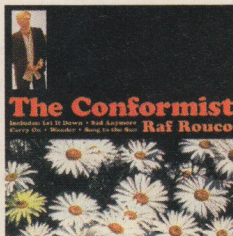
A mainly local road this month with an amazing variety and quality on display.

First up a gem from the 'quiet girl with a credit card' (a title of a previous album) **LISA MILLER**. Her low-key new release *Car Tapes* is a gem!

Miller is maybe still a well kept Melbourne secret but her country/soul leanings have been on open display through numerous albums and EPs in the past. This time she tackles some personal favourites, songs you might listen to while driving your favourite alternate highway perhaps. Contributions by **LYLE LOVETT**, **ARTHUR ALEXANDER**, **STEVE MILLER**, **DOUG SAHM** and **TOWNES VAN ZANDT** among others with precise, pristine backing from guitarists **SHANE O'MARA** and **SAM LEMANN**, as well as the economical use of other instruments. The focus is firmly on the engaging vocals of Ms Miller; this will be a critical rave and could be a commercial success given half a chance.
www.raoulrecords.com.au

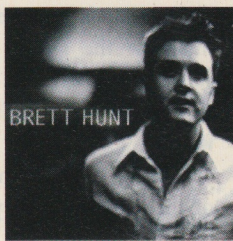


The Conformist by **RAF ROUCO** is another real surprise package. Citing **BUFFALO SPRINGFIELD** and **THE BAND** as influences, Rouco and his Sydney based cohorts, who include **SAM MCNALLY** on keyboards, **HAMISH STUART** on drums and the fine **BRUCE REID** on lap steel, have mixed 60's influenced pop, folkly psychedelic touches and most of all unusual and well thought out songs. All delivered in the wispy **NICK DRAKE** style vocal of Raf. In country terms this is right on the edge but it's good, roots based music in the same general area as

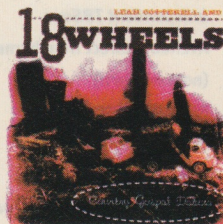


RON SEXSMITH and **BEN HARPER**. Very impressive. No website but an e-mail contact melid@optusnet.com.au

Also out of Sydney town is **BRETT HUNT** and like for Raf, the Club Acoustica scene has been a great showcase for this warm voiced, harmonica/guitar playing singer songwriter. Maybe **CHRIS WILSON** operates in a similar area; there are similarities to **JOHN WIBBERLEY** too. However Hunt's his own man, I doubt thoughts of country music stardom occupy much of his time but he is very Australian in his approach and that is amplified in the lyrics of songs such as *Roslyn Street* - about life on the edge in Kings Cross. With a name producer (Jonathan Burnside) on board and a swag of well-structured songs Hunt is a potential mainstream star, if the mainstream still supported quality music. Find out more at www.brethunt.com



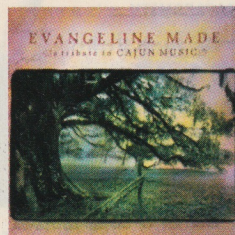
LEAH COTTERELL & 18 WHEELS may have adopted a US configuration but they hail from QLD. Brisbane to be exact, where the trucks have at least 22 wheels I believe. We'll forgive them though because *Country Gospel Deluxe* is a pretty good showcase for the delicious, **MARIANNE FAITHFULL** like vocals and songwriting talents of Cotterell and the twangy guitars and rhythm section of the band plus a couple of extra players or 'spare tyres' (or should that be tires)? No matter, like early **K.D. LANG** there is a parody aspect to the group's country/bluegrass trappings but some



incisive original wordplay and mix of some solid classics such as *Pick Me Up On Your Way Down* make sure the wheels never fall off.

Various artists *Evangeline Made - A Tribute To Cajun Music* (Vanguard/Shock).

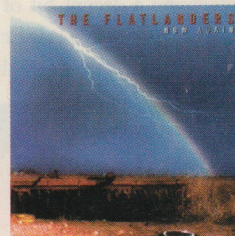
It might all sound nearly the same but I never get tired of that Cajun music and the mix of accordion, fiddle and French lyrics. Plenty of people from outside the Louisiana borders feel the same and here **LINDA RONSTADT**, **JOHN FOGERTY**, **LINDA & RICHARD**



THOMPSON, **NICK LOWE**, **MARIA MCKEE**, **RODNEY CROWELL**, **PATTY GRIFFIN** and even ex **NEW YORK DOLLS** singer **DAVID JOHANSEN** have all jumped on board with **ANN & MARC SAVOY** to create joyful sounds. Discover this and bon ton roulet (let the good times roll).

Finally **THE FLATLANDERS' Now Again** (New West/Shock). Once dubbed 'more a legend than a band' the improbable saga of the Lubbock combo that spawned individual careers for **JOE ELY**, **JIMMIE DALE GILMORE** and **BUTCH HANCOCK** could fill a book - or a new album 30 years later.

With Hancock responsible for most of Ely's great early output, maybe democracy is not the best way to go as I have heard a lot stronger songs come from this trio individually than some of the efforts they all had a hand in here. Perhaps the event of these three venerable West Texas troubadours actually getting back together is meant to be more significant than the resulting music. For example *Waving My Heart Goodbye* is a pale imitation of **JIMMIE DALE'S** earlier incandescent *Dallas*.



Ely produced but largely stays out of the spotlight, he leads off the trio's ensemble piece *Right Where I Belong* - It's good to see them back but they have never really been away.

KEITH GLASS