

Island, and *The Ballad of Titus Bramble* – a surreal, fiddle-led epic in the style of a Marty Robbins gunfighter ballad, whose titular hero shares his name with a former Wigan Athletic and Newcastle United footballer.

Cullen has engaged the services of a plethora of guest vocalists including Tom Holder, Jo Nye, Beck Lanehart, Clemency Jones and Minnesotan blues paragon Charlie Parr – whose distinctive voice soars atop the indestructible beats of *BoxKart*. Fans of Alabama 3 and Snakefarm will love this, but *Pilote* is uniquely itself. This is a lyrically-smart, witty record, with a bunch of good tunes and an illustration of a banjo-playing cat on the cover. Pretty-much irresistible, then.

pilote-music.bandcamp.com/album/libero

Steve Hunt

FLOATING SOFA QUARTET

The Moon We Watch Is The Same Go'
Danish Folk Music GO1116

Formed when the four members saw a hog floating down a river – not a sofa, but hey – this Nordic band (two Danes, a Swede, and a Finn on flutes, violin, bass, and accordion) has been around for a couple of years, playing gigs and winning plenty of plaudits before this debut. The experience shows in the confident arrangements and light swing of the mostly original material. But everything kicks up a grade on *Jomfruen Og Månen*, which joins a 1909 recording of the singing of an old ballad with some new music. It's daring, and it works in stunning fashion in forging a connection between past and present that gives resonance to both. From there, everything seems to have more depth, especially a slow piece like *Opdagede Omsider* by fiddler Clara Tesch, which offers a

shaded, beautiful sadness, or *Vill Dy Flyga?* where pieces slot together so perfectly and liltily that the piece becomes a joy. Throughout, they keep that lightness of touch, and the flute offers an open airiness to the melodies. Not so much as band to watch as one that's already arrived fully-formed.

floatingsofaquartet.com

Chris Nickson

MARKKU LEPISTÖ TRIO

New Voices Rapusaari RPU001

One-row melodeon – just ten melody buttons and two basses. Limiting? Not necessarily – just focusing.

Markku Lepistö is one of Finland's finest accordionists, member of Accordeon Samurai with Kepa, Riccardo Tesi et al, Tango-Orkesteri Unto, and many other groups over years of quiet excellence.

For this album he just plays the Italian-made Beltuna one-row Cajun melodeon, his fondness for which was particularly inspired by French Canadian music.

Early in its history the one-row came to be dubbed, as Markku says, "the poor man's organ", but in these days when hand-crafting a finely-wrought, rich-toned one like this costs, it's no longer a budget instrument (if it ever was; it was always a matter of the poor person's priorities).

Fewer possible notes means greater exploration of the instrument's limits, and these, all his own compositions, are strong melodies. He's joined by the other members of his trio: Petri Hakala on mandolin and mandola and Milla Viljamaa on grand piano, both long-time colleagues in various bands. Their input, in this balanced and complete sound, expands the arrangements, tone

colours and harmonic range, making an album that's a melodious and varied through-listen, but the essence of the tunes is with the one-row.

markkulepisto.com

Andrew Cronshaw

FLAVIA COEHLO

Sonho Real World Village PIASL056CDDIGI

A woman on an album's front cover walking on a cement street, wearing light brown boots, black jean shorts, a green and black shirt and, most importantly, lush red wings, doing this down thing with her hands, is whomever she says that she is; happy when she's happy, angry when she's angry, political when she's political. Keep that in mind when listening to Brazilian chanteuse Flavia Coelho's *Sonho Real* ('Real Dream').

What's a real dream? Whatever Flavia thinks it's. Listening to this album is listening to Flavia, and not to genre. From the outside, it's hard not to label *Sonho Real* pop – masterful pop – with the capacity to lift living in the favela, suburb or skyscraper out of the drudgery of daily concerns. *Pura Vida* wants to be a dub song while always being a vehicle for Flavia's personality. It's not a bad dream: girls and boys ride in cars to buy green tea ice cream these days to the sound of pop music.

Sonho Real is, more than anything else, a success at synthesis. Flavia and her producers mix standard music, dub, jazz scat, guitar playing and global bass-like rhythm, into songs that become more than the sum of skilfully blended different parts. *Sonho Real* means to be elegant, and is in a 21st Century way through the crispness of its songs.

worldvillagemusic.com

Adolf Alzuphar



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