



BRONAGH GALLAGHER
Gather Your Greatness
 IND
 ● 'Hand On My Heart'

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ALBUM NUMBER THREE FROM DERRY ACTRESS/CHANTEUSE

Still probably best known for her acting roles in the likes of *The Commitments*, *Pulp Fiction* and many others over a twenty-five-year career, Gallagher's musical talents have been somewhat overlooked. On what is only her third album, she gathers together the cream of local session musicians, including guitar ace Conor Brady (who played on the original *Commitments* soundtrack) and drummer Dave Hingerty (The Frames, etc).

Kicking off with a classic Phil Spector-ish, 'Be My Baby' backbeat on 'Can You Hear Me' (also featuring former Lone Justice singer Maria McKee) and the sweet soul of 'Make It Easier', it's clear where her musical loyalties and inspirations lie. Her approach and singing style continues in the tradition of a long list of white soul sisters, past and present: Dusty Springfield, Lulu, Amy Winehouse and Duffy (In fact it would be surprising if *Dusty In Memphis* wasn't a major influence on the sound of this record - 'Crimes' could have been lifted directly from those 1968 sessions). The single 'Radio' (featuring a surprising cameo from Eno) is a swampy, bluesy, brassy stew - of the kind that Tina Turner would have routinely belted out on her revue shows in the 1970s.

But it's on the steamy gospel of 'Heal Me' where she pleads for redemption like an old school evangelist, and the slow-burning, 'Hand On My Heart' where her voice really shines. In the style of Aretha's 'Share Your Love With Me' and Lorraine Ellison's 'Stay With Me Baby', the latter is a tour-de-force performance from all concerned, with an arrangement straight out of the Atlantic Records studio rulebook. A strong collection of soul tunes that will bolster her reputation - and the perfect way to whet your appetite for her live shows.

— *Out Now // Colm O'Hare*

BAND OF HORSES



Why Are You Ok
 INTERSCOPE/AMERICAN RECORDINGS
 ● 'Sitting in a Drawe'

QUALITY SUBURBAN SOUNDS FROM SEATTLE ROCKERS

The question-mark-free title of Seattle act Band of Horses' fifth album - their follow-up to 2012's *Mirage Rock* - is apparently taken from a cheeky email that one of producer Jason Lytle's children sent

to a primary school teacher. As for singer Ben Bridwell, the 38-year-old father of four seems to take his parenting duties seriously. "I work all night and then take them to school in the morning," he recently told an EW.com interviewer. "I'm the fucking scariest dad in the school, I'm sure."

Maybe he is, maybe he isn't, but there's a definite suburban theme to this album - which opens with a gloriously slow burning seven-minute epic entitled 'Dull Times/The Moon' ("Setting sun, forgotten my wine/ put the garbage where it doesn't belong...").

Produced by Granddaddy's Jason Lytle (with a little help from Rick Rubin), *Why Are You Ok* was largely recorded in a studio affixed to Bridwell's family home. Occasionally he seems to be in two minds about the life he has chosen. First cut 'Casual Party' addresses the anxieties of polite social gatherings: "The job, the babble on/ the recreational hobbies/ No, it never stops." Presumably he won't be inviting the neighbours around for a listening session.

Of course, there's more to this album than that, but the occasionally sentimental lyrics largely address everyday life issues (love, doubt, family, etc.). The melodic 'Sitting in a Drawer' is more of the sound of a man questioning his choices: "Do you love me? Which one is it?/ We should be living in a warehouse district... But darling, you know it shouldn't be like that/ Can I go with you to the laundromat?"

Musically, despite occasional samples, the overall sound is indie rock infused with country/folk, with definite flashbacks to their previous four releases.

Fans certainly won't be disappointed. To this reviewer's ears, it sometimes sounds as though the members of Mercury Rev all got married, settled down, and relocated to the far outskirts of Nashville. Which isn't a bad starting point at all.

— *Out May 27 // Olaf Tyaransen*

DERMOT BARRETT



Dawns Eras Tides
 PLANETARY DISCS
 ● 'Decisions Decisions'

FULL SPEED AHEAD FOR DUBLIN POWER POP GROUP

For those of us who fondly remember the late, great Dublin band, Ten Speed Racer, it should come as no surprise that former front-man Dermot Barrett's first album released under his given name is a perfect example of hook-laden power pop at its finest. What may come as a surprise is the fact that, for *Dawns Eras Tides*, he has got the band back together.

All three brothers Barrett are present and correct, while Terry Cullen returns on drums and Joe Chester, who also produces the album, is back playing whatever he can get his hands on: guitar, piano, organ and banjo. The easy rapport between these musicians adds up to a confident record, that's skillfully played and tastefully rendered. Fans of Ten Speed Racer and Barrett's previous solo work under the moniker Maskedman (check 2011's *The Illusion of Grandeur*), will find themselves on familiar ground, but *Dawns Eras Tides* is a much more

stripped-down and mature affair.

Standout tracks such as lead single 'Decisions Decisions', the driving, fuzzed-up indie stomp of 'Stealing Stars', and the top-down driving rock of 'Muddy Water' are all examples of a swaggering Americana that Wilco would be proud to call their own. And, on songs such as 'Save Me With Love' - a cool breeze of a love song - and on the sun-kissed 'A Seam Of Gold', it's clear that the Norway-based songwriter has crafted an album custom-built for the famous Irish summer: upbeat pop songs with big, sunny choruses infused with a sense that the clouds are gathering just beyond the horizon.

'The Wood Beyond The River' is a perfect way to end the album: a carefully constructed mini-epic with a sparsely arranged three-chord repeated pattern that never goes quite where you expect it to, its ebbs and flows are a testament to both Chester's production and Barrett's economic songwriting.

— *Out Now // Peter McNally*

CHECKPOINT



Thorn Among The Roses
 MONO MANIC RECORDS
 ● 'Sounds Of The City'

DUBLIN-BASED ROCKERS DELIVER BREAKNECK PUNK-INFUSED DEBUT

Four-piece alternative band Checkpoint showcase their heavily influenced late-seventies and early-eighties rock style on their first album *Thorn Among The Roses*. The record begins with 'Sounds of The City', a catchy, punky opener that evokes the best elements of the notorious Camden indie scene of the early noughties. 'Abercrombie Like' is a piffy, punchy track, reminiscent of early Green Day, while riveting drums drive the track 'Boy in Blue', as faintly distorted guitar sounds flutter in and out.

Midway through *Thorn Among The Roses*, the record is broken up by a welcome interlude. 'Just', a two-minute burst of instrumental joy, leads into the album's most positive tune. The lyrics - "Can't go another day running from my fears" - offer depth to 'Don't Give In'.

'Get Away From You', 'Breaking You Down' and 'Blowing Up Bombs' are enjoyable, but because of their rapid energy, might have fared better as brisk two-minute offerings. However, 'Driven You Dead' is the sort of song that you could listen to for another ten minutes. Its pristine drumming and guitar solos are wonderfully engaging. On 'Reasons For A Revolution', Seán Dunne's vocals particularly stand out, and the LP is then bookended by the acoustic track 'Overboard'.

Overall, this is a superb debut