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# fROOTS

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son caught the bug at the beginning of a revival of the endangered instrument and went on to be crowned king at the first-ever Nyckelharpa World Championship. The rest is history, or perhaps, Swedish folk legend.

Fiddler Mikael Marin and guitarist Roger Tallroth learned their crafts in the time-honoured way: sitting and playing with older folk musicians, schooled in the living Swedish traditions.

To celebrate their 30th year together, Väsen has recorded an album of 15 new original tunes. Their musical communication has been described as “near-telepathic”.

With lightning speed they run, then turn together like clear water flowing around a rock. Their craggy Swedish harmonies melt into rounded resonances, and the music unfolds with an integral essence—a “vasen”.

Commenting on the sound of three stringed instruments playing together, guitarist Roger Tallroth says, “It’s a rich and full sound from the three of us because we tune our instruments down. I’m really low in pitch, the viola is both high and low, so all together it’s quite a mellow sound.”

Standout tracks: *På Väg* (*On The Way*), composed on a rather long tour of Norway and Germany, and *Visselblåsaren* (*Whistle Blower*), not the political kind, but an invitation to, you know, “put your lips together and blow”.

— By Lark Clark

## Allison Lupton

Words of Love (Independent)



When I listen to *Words of Love*, I hear clean, elegant lines. I think of

minimalist art and architecture transplanted into Celtic-style music.

Lupton’s collection feels light and effortless but when you listen closely, you know she understands form. You know no detail was left hanging.

In *Away*, *Lost Jimmy Whelen* and *the Ontario Tune Set*, you hear traditional tunes that are both familiar and fresh. Lupton’s own songs show a deep knowledge of Scottish, Irish, and Canadian folk traditions and history.

There’s a crystal clarity to this album, recorded by Jeremy Darby and Julian Decorte at Canterbury Music Company. Even the slow, sensitive tunes have clean outlines;



Allison Lupton

each musical voice etched clearly and expertly.

Lupton plays the flute like a dream and her voice is so pure as to be, itself, flute-like. She is accompanied by a fleet of talent, including Tony McManus (guitar), Andrew Collins (mandolin), Shane Cook (fiddle, mandolin), Joseph Phillips (bass), and Ivan Rosenberg (Dobro). In other words, *Words of Love* is a treat.

— By Jackie Bell

## Coig

Ashlar (Independent)



Cape Breton's Coig go from strength to strength and, if anyone

has doubts about this, then one listen to *Ashlar* will blow those thoughts away for good!

Their lineup remains Chrissy Cowley (fiddle), Rachel Davis (vocals, fiddle, viola), Jason Roach (piano), and Darren McMullen (guitar, mandolin, bouzouki, banjo, and everything else).

The tune sets are an amalgamation of Celtic traditionals and originals written by the band or people they've been influenced by. The songs include *Deep Down In The River* by Ashley Condon and David Francey—a soulful number sung by Rachel—and *The Capable Wife*, a reworking of Kate Rusby's version of *The Old Man*, wittily sung by Darren.

At the heart of the album—and of Coig—is *From The Old Tapes*. It is a collection of tunes that Chrissy and Jason grew up learning from much-copied cassettes of kitchen table sessions, parties, and dances in Cape Breton. That was how the old tunes were being passed down as the two of them grew up, and this set shows how their efforts to search the tapes for hidden



Coig

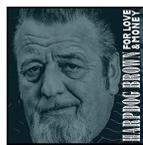
gems are still paying off today.

Highly recommended.

— By Tim Readman

## Harpdog Brown

For Love & Money (Dog House)



New Orleans grooves, jump blues, nods to Louis Armstrong and Dr. John make this unexpected southern stroll from blues harp veteran Harpdog Brown a real treat.

The harp and vocal veteran pulls out some choice firepower, starting with Steve Dawson in the producer's chair, adding a little guitar, with keyboard whiz Dave Webb attacking piano and organ, and a trio of horns solo or together (William Abbott

on reeds, Skye Lambourne's trombone, Jerry Cook's saxophones), beside longtime rhythm pals like drummer Robert Vail Grant.

The marvellous momentum really takes over with classics such as the Louis Jordan vehicle *Blue Light Boogie*, Memphis Slim's *The Comeback*, and Wynonie Harris's *Buzzard Luck* next to Brown's own *Reefer Lovin' Woman*. Friends such as Brandon Issak, Wayne Berezan, Lambourne, and Webb (the title song) contribute extra tunes, garnering a vintage feel from the assembled crew, live off the floor.

Their hip-grinding strokes make such a natural fit for the inventive harmonica man you

have to wonder why Brown didn't try this sooner, though he's having even more fun singing.

— By Roger Levesque

## Old Paint Duo

Old Paint Duo (Independent)



Some of the greatest roots music has been done by duos.

Think of Gram and Emmylou, the Everly Brothers, the Louvin Brothers, and so on. Victoria's Old Paint Duo is not out of place on this illustrious list.

The husband/wife duo of Jeff Dill and Miriam Sonstenes, who is known to roots music aficionados as a member of the Sweet Lowdown, have created a tasty gem of an album.

Their voices blend seamlessly with harmonies that seem attainable only by siblings or spouses. They cover a nice range of tunes from the Louvin Brothers' *Are You Teasing Me* to the country swing classic *Down in San Antonio*, and a few original songs that more than hold their own.

Sonstenes's fiddling, replete with double stops, is some of the best coming out of the West. She studied under the great



Harpdog Brown