



Europe REVIEWS

echoing and remoulding the lyrical contents – ballads of murder and death – to create huge, all-encompassing soundworlds that gives the material a powerful new lease of life.

Roberts is in excellent voice, taking a higher, sweeter register than he is generally known for – there is an astringent quality to his vocals on his earlier albums. On the standout track 'Clerk Colven' (a version of 'The Ballad of George Collins'), he and his collaborators convincingly execute a cautionary tale of what happens when you think you're entitled to a bit on the side with a mermaid (you die, obvs). Skuse's fascinating use of electronics marks her out as a unique composer-musician, and the keyboard work is minimal and perfectly weighted against Roberts' vocals. *What News* just might be the best of Roberts' trad albums – and that makes it essential listening for fans.

TIM CUMMING

TRACK TO TRY *Clerk Colven*

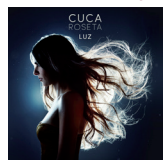
Cuca Roseta

Luz

Sony Music Portugal (53 mins)

★★★★★

Light on its feet: this is an illuminating pop fado album



This latest album from Portuguese singer and new-wave *fadista* Cuca Roseta is a bright and upbeat affair. It's well recorded, well produced and features a line-up of fine musicians. The theme of the album's title, *Luz* (Light), is intended to be a spiritual thread that's woven through the album. Tracks such as 'Luzinha', 'Luz Materna' and 'Luz do Mundo' push this dimension explicitly, while in other songs the link is (thankfully) a little more tenuous. It all feels beside the point. Cuca's career began with pop music, and it's the lighter, more commercial side of *fado* that's her forte. The disc has pace, is easy to listen to, and forges an immediate connection. This album won't, on the other hand, cause much frowning of the brow (though there's certainly nothing wrong with that).

For this listener, the most enjoyable songs of the album were the jaunty 'Foge'; a stylish pop-flamenco number by composer Pedro Jóia called 'Versos Contados'; and 'Quero', a pure pop ballad courtesy of singer-songwriter Carolina Deslandes.

MICHAEL MACAROON

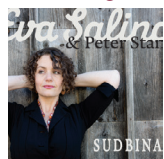
TRACK TO TRY *Versos Contados*

Eva Salina & Peter Stan Sudbina

Vogiton Records (33 mins)

★★★★★

A tribute to a legend: from one Roma singer to another



Vida Pavlović was one of the most highly regarded Roma singers to have existed, tragically dying before her time in 2005. Perhaps because she never achieved international recognition for her prowess, Eva Salina, the Brooklyn-based, California-grown singer of the Balkan diaspora, has produced this heartfelt tribute, comprising eight covers of songs from Pavlović's repertoire. Salina is joined by Serbian/Romanian Roma accordionist Peter Stan whose virtuosic and lyrical deftness of touch make a good match for Salina's powerful, poignant vocals.

Salina's main aim with this album is to remember Pavlović, so that her songs might still be sung. Yet it is more than this: it is an exploration, through Pavlović's life and songs, of the pain and suffering that a woman can endure while retaining dignity and passion. At a time when increasing focus is being drawn to women's experiences this approach seems as relevant as ever. From the pleading yet hopeful 'Pusti me da Živim' to the more playful 'Aven, Aven Romalen', Salina and Stan produce an intimate sound (in contrast to Pavlović's ensemble-based recordings), the timbre thickening slightly when they are joined for the last track by Demiran Čerimović on trumpet.

TOM NEWELL

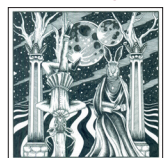
TRACK TO TRY *E Laute Baalen Taj Roven*

Hannah Sanders & Ben Savage Awake

Proper (46 mins)

★★★★★

Haunting, dreamlike folk music to wake up to



There are some beautiful songs opening the second album by this folk duo, building on the impact of their debut set, 2016's *Before the Sun*. Singer and guitarist Sanders teamed up with The Willows' dobro player following her beautiful solo debut, *Charms Against Sorrow*, and the pair's close harmonies and strong lead voices ▶



Rob Bridge, Redwood Photography

Greg Russell & Ciaran Algar Utopia and Wasteland

RootBeat Records (50 mins)

★★★★★

Urgent political folk from young northern duo



No prizes for guessing to where the 'utopia and wasteland' of the title refers. It comes as no surprise that Greg Russell and fiddler Ciaran Algar's fourth studio album is something of a state-of-the-nation address, given that this young northern English duo have already stamped their mark with award-winning sociopolitical folk songs and that it comes hot on the heels of Greg Russell's solo album *Inclined to be Red* and his protest-song project, *Shake the Chains*.

The pair's talents come to the fore in eight original compositions, juxtaposed with traditional tunes and covers and weaving

in fascinating histories such as the story of Walter Tull, the first black footballer in the English top flight. Such unearthed stories on the album are offset by very immediate responses to issues like the Grenfell Tower disaster and the construction of the HS2 train line.

Throughout, Algar's effortless fiddle style stands out, though he also plays *bodhrán*, tenor banjo and electric tenor guitar. Russell's insistent voice takes the lead, while Algar contributes vocals on the arresting 'We are Leaving'. Producer Mark Tucker adds highly effective bass and backing vocals on tracks such as 'Seven Hills', bringing a greater depth. *Utopia and Wasteland* is a confident statement.

NATHANIEL HANDY

TRACK TO TRY *Seven Hills*