



**roots**

**Voices**

Eric Bogle  
Rouseabout/MGM

★★★★☆

While his singing may not set pulses racing, Eric Bogle's songs have assuredly tugged heartstrings through the years. Known far and wide as the man who wrote *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda*, an epic that stands tall in the pantheon of anti-war anthems, the expat Scot continues to pen cogent commentaries expressing his vehement opposition to armed conflicts. It's no surprise, then, that the outstanding cut on his latest album alludes to the harrowing bloodshed in the Middle East that monopolises current news bulletins. As Bogle intones gravely in a characteristically powerful chorus: "Once again the dogs of war have been unmuzzled and unleashed and once again we'll

wallow in the belly of the beast." An insistent dampened acoustic guitar riff, later reinforced by drums and a cello solo, underscores the potency and poignancy of the master songsmith's *First the Children*. Another heart-rending work, *Once Upon a Time*, refers to the refugee calamity and the "legions of lost" that "trudged on by". Contrary to the title, *When I'm Dead* is in an altogether lighter vein, with the master songwriter gleefully putting down the divas Madonna, Rihanna and Beyonce: "They all sound just the same those superstars with just one name."

Elsewhere on *Voices*, Bogle makes space for tracks that showcase the talents of long-time accompanist John Munro and other local songwriters, Pete Titchener and Simon Wilkins. Indeed, the album starts with Bogle singing the praises of his partner-in-rhyme (*A Fork in the Road*), with Munro lending instrumental and vocal support. It ends with his Scottish sidekick taking high-register lead vocals on his self-composed title track.

**Tony Hillier**