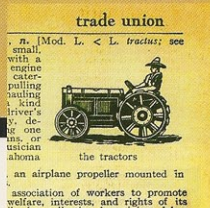
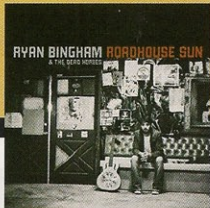
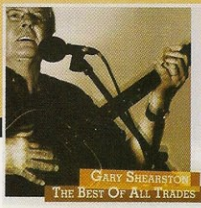
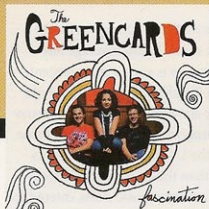


TWISTS AND TURNS

BY KEITH GLASS

There is always a new twist or turn on the alternate highway. This month finds two old campaigners and two comparatively new acts negotiating the tricky terrain to post rewarding results.



Top of the pile, the fantastic new album from our own **THE GREENCARDS** who have well and truly found their own voices with an alt/pop/newgrass near masterpiece. Singer bass player **CAROL YOUNG** has spearheaded the attack by stepping up as the chief songwriter, and more than ever before, the focal point vocalist. Dropping previous **ALISON KRAUSS** or **GILLIAN WELCH** affectations and embracing a hitherto unused penchant for pop, the result is triumphant for anyone with an open mind. The first half of this CD is exceptional, so good just about impossible to maintain. Luckily the instrumental prowess of **KYM WARNER** and **EAMON MCLOUGHLIN** step out of the atmospheric territory of the initial onslaught to provide further proof they are now fully fledged virtuosos. This trio should be filling concert halls in their native lands. I don't know how much of this you are going to hear on country radio but common programmers - give your listeners some appreciation credit and play *The Avenue*, *Outskirts Of Blue* or even the quirky *Chico Calling* which Carol co-wrote with

another antipodean **JEDD HUGHES**. Right now **THE GREENCARDS** are just about our finest export and their album *Fascination* (Sugar Hill) a critical smash.

GARY SHEARSTON has been there with the world-wide hit of his version of **COLE PORTER**'s *I Get A Kick Out Of You*. These days his ecclesiastic-driven rustic lifestyle is a little at odds with the sophistication of Porter's music, but then that was the point. The folkie in Gary has always been tempered by an embrace of the unfamiliar and on his gargantuan new 24 track, two CD release *The Best Of All Trades* (Rouseabout) he runs amok on themes of love for people and the land. By land I mean the planet. Gary is all inclusive as his words *We Are Australia* over a very familiar traditional melody ably demonstrate. There are many other examples. Shearston's palpable affection for a flawed humanity is given full rein. Witness *The Harmonica Man* or *Hey, Charlie Perkins*. The surprising aspect is the bluesy edge to quite a few of the songs. The juxtaposition with

Shearston's wide open fog horn style of singing is quite appealing and **JOHN WILLIAMSON** take note, da blues does have a place in 'Oztrailian' music. In fact it just might be the bluest continent of all. The production by **ROGER ILOTT** has been kept spare. Just sometimes I wished for more musical 'kick' but Gary has here a document that should finally place him in the pantheon of our greatest song commentators.

Talking of musical kick, **RYAN BINGHAM** has gone the other way on his sophomore album *Roadhouse Sun* (Lost Highway) along with his band **THE DEAD HORSES**. After about five over blistered tracks you begin to wonder if they are not flogging one, wringing all the promise and potential out of the hapless singer/songwriter. Bingham came in from the cold over in Austin, Texas a while back and posted a pretty good first album. Now he has been on the road and the wattage has climbed up a notch or three. While I guess that is indicated by the title, it works against subtlety if in fact any of the songs have any. Hard to know because I suffered ear bleed with what I detected were a bunch

written and recorded to quickly. You may listen and disagree - I certainly don't count Bingham out, just lost on the highway.

Finally a man who takes quite a while to put out a new album, but when he does, the comforting thing is it is more of the same but different. Works if you are **STEVE RIPLEY**, your group is called **THE TRACTORS** and you are able to forge a loose aggregation to make your fully formed vision a reality. A little bit **J.J. CALE**, a little **MAD DOG'S & ENGLISHMEN** and a lot of the swing part of Western which is prevalent around their base of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Lording it over all but back in the mix, the throaty vocals of Ripley. The aforementioned Cale is here as a writer and performer, **LEON RUSSELL**, the main man of the 'Mad Dog's' smash of the 70's ditto as an integral keyboard sound. Both are Okies through and though but the crew is supplemented by the great **FATS KAPLAN** on just about every other instrument (or so it seems.) Even **HARLAN HOWARD**'s *Pick Me Up On Your Way Down* slots right in and Ripley's own songs may be slight but mainly a whole lot of fun.