About Music – By Mariss McTucker

Megan Makeever: *Close*

Recorded by Steve Kaul at Wild Sound Recording Studios, Minneapolis, MN, with additional recording by Gil Stober and Jake Fleming at The Shed and Peak Recording studios, Bozeman, MT; produced by Megan Makeever, 2014.

Bozeman singer/songwriter Megan Makeever has 12 self-penned numbers here that explore the highs and lows of human emotion, as is her wont. Besides playing piano, guitar and flute on the album, she delivers her material with a very accomplished set of pipes. Talented musicians too many to enumerate accompany her in small ensembles, imparting a sparse, clean sound to the effort.

Her work is pensive and immediate, and she relates to her listeners easily with the intimacy of a cabaret chanteuse. Her lyrics are conversational within their pretty melodies, which wouldn't come easy without excellent vocal control and deft instrumental chops.

"Will You Still Love Me?," with a rolling piano riff, has a music-box feel. Makeever explores a relationship over time, asking, "Will you still kiss me, even when my smile gets droopy?"

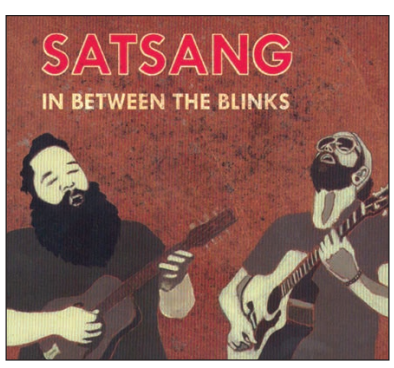
"Conversation of History" is terrific. With just Makeever on piano, it's an emotional dialog between two ex-lovers. Makeever's protagonist lays bare her broken heart, asking why the affair has gone awry. Enter another skilled Bozeman vocalist, Jake Koelzer, to sing the male part. He apologizes for not being truthful before Makeever joins him in a duet of counterpoint, lyric and melody clashing as during an argument. Maria Coyne arrives to sing the third vocal as the other woman. I enjoyed it!

"When the Day Is Done" is an optimistic prayer. Lindsay Kubina sings a high harmony on the chorus ("I hope you find hope amidst the darkness, you find some light"), and a string quartet plays a gorgeous interlude. Elegant!

Makeever is currently studying flute performance in Minnesota, but comes home frequently and performs. Hopefully you can catch her locally.

Visit meganmakeever.com.

Satsang: *In Between the Blinks*



Recorded and produced by John McVey at Coupe Studios, Boulder, CO, 2014.

Bozeman musicians Drew McManus and David Cleaves are a duo with a message of love, performed on reggae-tinged originals by McManus. Playing guitar and singing solo in a Jamaican accent, McManus, together with Cleaves on mandolin, urges people to come together and make this a better world by respecting each other and working for peace.

McManus says the album is "a call to arms for all beings to unify for what is right and just." His adept tenor shines on the duo's words of hope, and fans will delight in the lyrics set to danceable tunes. Cleaves's mando breaks will keep the toes tappin' as well.

A syncopated beat within the reggae tempo sets the tone on "These Words," as McManus sings, "I learned from Maya Angelou to love my scars ..." while Cleaves plays crunchy chords.

"Barefoot Blues" is a mellow loper, and "In Between the Blinks," the title song, has a catchy pop feel. McManus sings with an interesting vocal hitch on words like "ready" and "steady," as is his custom.

"Pirate News" takes a different tack. McManus sings of an antagonist who, detesting hypocrisy, forsakes non-violence. The song provides chilling counterpoint to the band's otherwise gentle missive, and therefore gives more weight to their pacifism. Visit the band at facebook.com/satsangMT.

The Molotov Quintet: *Ridin' Sideways*

Recorded, mixed and mastered at Peach Street Studios, Bozeman, MT, 2014.

Combine two extremely gifted musicians (Aaron Banfield and Gabe Lavin). Add equal parts talent from Loren Block, Alex Shwab and Jelani Mahiri. Mix in Latin, flamenco, Brazilian, Arabic, and jazz influences. Shake well, then pop *Ridin' Sideways* – The Molotov Quintet's all original debut – into an appropriate listening device. Enjoy!

Formed just over a year ago, the quintet has already shared the bill with Buddy Guy, Grand Funk Railroad, Steel Pulse and Toubab Krewe. But that fast-burning flame had been carefully kindled. Lavin studied the oud (a fretless instrument which captures the quarter tones in Arabic scales) in Morocco, then in Egypt during the recent uprising, when Molotov cocktails ignited the streets. "So yeah, 'Molotov cocktail' influenced our name," says Banfield.

Recorded at Peach Street Studios in Bozeman, *Ridin' Sideways* conveys the dynamism of the group's live performances, which transport audiences to exotic places with an energy that evokes The Gipsy Kings. The 16 instrumentals effortlessly fuse genres, taking listeners on a world pilgrimage that's both uplifting and reflective.

The album kicks off with "Jobatito" (a nod to Antonio Jobim and flamenco guitarist Tomatito), featuring Mahiri on bongos and the pandeiro, and Shwab on the cajon. "Country Calamari" really gets things cooking, showing off the bass and drums in 6/8 time. Mixing jazz and Arabic chord progressions, "Oud To Jazz" takes the energy down a notch, with the guiro (a washboard-like gourd) lending a Latin vibe.

"Helado de Mezcal" (written at a Cinco de Mayo gig) reflects playful spontaneity, with Mahiri rocking the clave. Dancing is mandatory on this one!

Recorded impromptu in the studio, "Saharan Swing" has Banfield playing an Afro beat over a pentatonic scale while Lavin improvises, and Shwab keeps rhythm on the cajon instead of the drum set.

The title track, "Ridin' Sideways" features Lavin on oud and Banfield strumming a flamenco rhumba pattern. Using a bulerias (12/8) flamenco rhythm, the reflective "Paco's Journey" pays homage to the late flamenco guitarist Paco de Lucia. "No Daddy, No Samba" (again featuring the cajon) invites more dancing – it's the next best thing to being in Rio!

For more about group, visit soundcloud.com/the-molotov-quintet or find them on Facebook.

– Cynthia Logan

Dolce Canto: *A Joyful Season*

Recorded by Rick Kuschel of The Recording Center at various venues and at The University of Montana Music Recital Hall in Missoula, MT, produced by Michael Marsolek, 2014.

Missoula's esteemed vocal ensemble Dolce Canto has released *A Joyful Season* just in time for the holidays. It features best-loved songs the group has sung over the years, and a few their listeners may not have heard. As usual, the choir effortlessly melds bass, soprano, alto, and tenor voices into a melodious whole that can deftly alter course into smaller configurations and back again.

Several songs were recorded live at various venues, the others at the university's recital hall with no audience. As one would guess, stellar engineering abounds on the 15 pieces.

The album conjures a thoughtful mood, abstaining from the giddy and omnipresent commercial nature of Christmas. This is a good thing; it encourages the listener to think about what the season really means. There is a specific order to the track list, says artistic director Peter Park, designed to create a musical journey, and it works well.

A whisper of men's voices opens the first number, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel," like a prayer; "Still, Still, Still" enters with beautiful and wistfully understated "ooh-oohs" before the choir softly swaddles the lyric in hushed, ethereal tones. I love it!

"A Christmas Lullaby," with its gorgeous melody, seems to demand the acoustics of an arched ceiling. Voices of echoing "la-la-la-laaaah-hs," rapturous and expansive, glide over passing chords, creating movement.

The spiritual, "Glory, Glory, Glory to the Newborn King," is a showstopper. In a change of pace, tenor Thomas Hensley sings to the rafters while the chorale provides elegant, majestic background, building tension; soon the song erupts with lots of resounding "glory glories." The sopranos lead the charge in an all-out torrent of overlapping lyrics, and everyone jumps in with a call-and-response gospel feel before the smashing ending. This one rocks! There's much more here, all of it wonderful.

Visit www.dolcecanto.info.

Louie Bond and the Texas Playgirl: *She'll Get You*

Recorded at Jim Rogers Studios, Missoula, MT, Yellow Seahorse, Corvallis, MT; and Sunset Bench Studios, Missoula, MT; produced by Kimberlee Carlson and Louie Bond, 2014.

Bond. Louie Bond. The smooth-styled, long-time Missoula guitar pro has teamed with singer Kimberlee Carlson to craft a terrific throwback album that mixes classic country, jazz and swing standards and a few Bond originals. Belt-buckle shiners, ballads, uptempo lopers, they're all here.

The album was recorded with a stripped-down, dance-hall stable of instruments. Those who play them should be familiar to Montana music lovers as first-class pickers in many bands: Pete Hand, bass; Micki Singer and Roger Moquin, drums; David Horgan, pedal steel; and Jim Rogers, piano. Don't forget Bond on guitars and a little bass. The superb, uncluttered mix and great musicianship get your toes tappin' right away.

On "That's How the West Was Swung," Bond sings and plays snaky guitar, and hoppin' pedal steel riffs flow over succinct drum work. While Rogers tinkles the ivories, Carlson's torchy, bluesy touch, akin to the great jazz singer Nancy Wilson, caresses "Cow Cow Boogie." Her gentle, warbly vibrato nuzzles the lyrics; the same goes for her knock-out solo on the sultry Bond/Carlson tune, "In Between of Things." She adds a satiny, swooping sheen to her words, lengthening them like she's sleepwalking. Bond plays a guitar interlude that ripples like falling beads of water. I like this a lot!

Bond's wistful original, "When Did You Learn the Blues," which he sings by himself, is reflective and sadly sweet. And Carlson's honeyed vocals pair perfectly with Bond's soft, rich baritone burr. Witness "You Do Me Good," a sweet waltz with its demanding range.

On "Some Women," which Bond co-wrote with Kostas and the late Hoyt Axton, a collaborator and friend, the duo trades verses, Carlson leaning on the bent notes. They swap harmonies on the catchy chorus and Bond plays a clipped, wiggly, Mark Knopfler-esque break. Cool!

Having absorbed umpteen guitar styles from his years playing hits in bar bands, and opening for or backing many country stars, Bond has thoroughly and seamlessly created his own style.

Discerning music-lovers will find lots to enjoy here. Snap it up and your ears will be grateful.

State of the Arts welcomes CDs

State of the Arts welcomes CD submissions by Montana musicians for inclusion in the About Music section. The recordings must be professional, commercially available, full-length CDs, with cover art and liner notes. Brief biographical information on band members would be helpful to the writer.

Please send submissions to either the Montana Arts Council, PO Box 202201, Helena, MT, 59620; or *Lively Times*, 33651 Eagle Pass Trl., Charlo, MT 59824.