

Linen Shorts

Alpcologne Alpha [Westpark 87148 (2008)] This appropriately named group from Cologne features Victoria Riccio, a singer, and three alphorn players. Alphorns, ungainly 16-foot long instruments from the Alps that have neither keys nor valves, are usually played by traditional musicians and can be heard six miles away on a clear night. As Switzerland's national instrument, they have seldom been used outside of their original context, although in more recent years a few innovators have sprung up, starting with Hans Kennel and his four-member alphorn orchestra called Mytha and, more recently, Eliana Burki and a few others. Alpcologne, the latest innovators, still don't transform the instrument into something suitable for a Pied Piper wannabe. The original compositions actually explore ska, tango, and oriental sounds, but it's the covers that are bound to draw attention to the group. In addition to the Cologne anthem and yet another rendition of "La Paloma," Alpcologne boldly tries its hand at "Jambalaya." The album closes with what might be the most original version of "These Boots Are Made for Walking" since the South African group the Kalahari Surfers turned it into an anti-apartheid anthem in the 1980s. (PEC)

Bryan Sutton and Friends *Almost Live* [Sugar Hill SUG-CD-4040 (2009)] Nashville acoustic guitarist Bryan Sutton travels in some fast company, and he called in some favors from his session collaborators for his third solo album, *Almost Live*. Recorded live in the studio, the mostly instrumental disc includes a bunch of Sutton originals that include the sparkling bluegrass runs of "Morning Top," the Django Reinhardt-inspired hot jazz of "Le Pont de la Moustache," and the Appalachian rag "Wonder Valley Gals." Sutton cut two tracks with his "regular" band Hot Rize, including a bouncy version of Norman Blake's "Church Street



Alpcologne - walking six miles in 16-foot boots

Blues" sung by Tim O'Brien. He also plays duets with Béla Fleck (the convoluted "Rye Straw Suite"), Russ Barenberg (the moody instrumental, "Dark Island"), and sings the Delmore Brothers standard "Gonna Lay Down My Old Guitar" with Chris Thile. Sutton's playing is flawless, and he set the bar high by choosing collaborators like Fleck, O'Brien, Sam Bush, and Thile's Punch Brothers. Acoustic instrumental music doesn't get any better than this. (MP)

Hot Griselda [Appel Records APR 1317 (2009)] Hot Griselda is a quartet of two Dutch musicians and two Belgian musicians who play a style of Celtic music that isn't quite Irish, Dutch, or Belgian, but is instead a composite of all three. With two uilleann pipers who also wrote the material, Stijn Van Beek and Toon

Van Mierlo (who also adds melodeon, whistle, and soprano sax), and a rhythm section of guitar, electric guitar, and bouzouki, the music is dynamic, rhythmic, and very inventive. If there's one misstep, it's the use of the saxophone, which lacks the bite of the pipes, on a couple of the tracks. An interestingly different take on Celtic music. (JL)

Oreka TX Nömadak TX [World Village 468085 (2009)] The musical traditions of the Basque region are fused with a global range of influences to create the unique sound of the Spain-based duo Oreka TX. *Nömadak TX* is its second CD (there is also award-winning documentary film about this project), recorded with nomadic musicians and singers in Mongolia, India, Morocco, Algeria, and Scandinavia. Igor Otxoa and Harkaitz Martinez

de San Vicente coax a variety of otherworldly melodic rhythms on the txalaparta (pronounced: zaldiparta), a wooden, xylophone-like instrument struck by mallets. (CH)

Lisa o Piu When This Was the Future [Subliminal Sounds SUBCD29 (2009)] Breathy, tranquil, moody folk music in a late-60s style by the quiet-voiced Swedish songwriter Lisa Isaksson. Backed in a very understated way by her band Piu, Isaksson sings (in English) of cinnamon seas, mythical forests, and other timeless themes. Her acoustic guitar and flute form the basis for her songs, with the band adding in bits of accordion, Mellotron, fiddle, harp, percussion, and backing vocals. Her music invokes a feelings of rainy nights, candle light, incense, and sitting by the fireside, and if that's the mood you'd like to set, this makes for the perfect soundtrack. (JL)

The Ivan Drever Band Every Beat of the Drum [Nutshell Music NSMCD12 (2009)] Guitarist and singer Ivan Drever has a history of combining rock with folk, both in his songwriting and his work as front man for the band Wolfstone. The Orkney native has been doing solo and duo work lately, but with this five-song EP he return to band mode with former Wolfstone bandmate Andy Murray on electric guitar and vocals, Finaly Wells on bass and vocals, and Ian Coates on drums and percussion. This is a sort of taster CD to prepare the way for a full-length project that the foursome is working on. It suggests that that recording will have some vintage folk-rock material as well as a few quieter pieces, with, as ever, Drever's ear for rhythm and the play of word and melody. Notable cuts include "Harbour Lights" and "Stranger's Tongue." (KD)

Big Bill Morganfield Born Lover [Black Shuck 001/VizzTone (2009)] When Morganfield takes the stage, nobody has to ask, "Who's