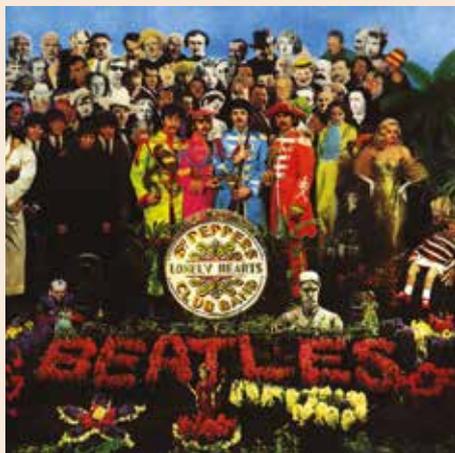


Rock, Pop and Other Nice Music

NIGEL FINN IS FIT AGAIN, SO HE'S REVIEWING FIVE NEW RELEASES FOR OUR DELECTATION



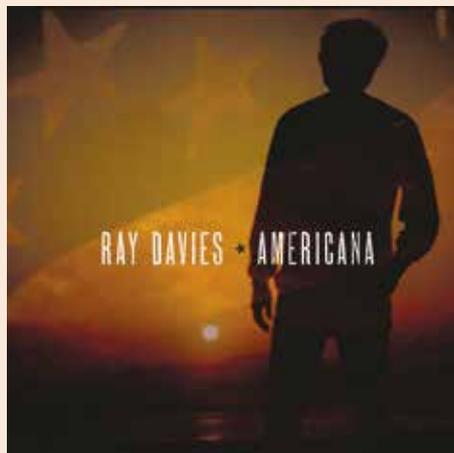
THE BEATLES

Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band – Anniversary Edition

Parlophone 0602557455366

I remember Sgt Pepper's release; my father had a copy and it was played a lot. At the time we had a mono system that my father had built, so stereo was of no concern. In 2009 I bought the re-master in stereo – and wished I'd bought the mono version. The stereo mix was distracting rather than adding, and then came all the stuff about mixing in mono. Come 2017 and here's a new stereo mix by Giles Martin. Re-mixing the Beatles could so easily offend, but when it comes to the stereo mix it could hardly be worse. It's suddenly very easy to hear just what fine musicians the Beatles were – all of them. Paul McCartney's bass is fat and solid, and the contribution he makes to each song is very obvious. At the same time Ringo's drumming is bold and powerful in the mix, and the little drum fill in *With a Little Help From My Friends* is a 'play-it-again' delight. *Mr Kite* adapts really well to stereo and is suitably trippy, while *Within You, Without You* and *Lovely Rita* breaks down into seriously good grooves which were always there but never sounded so strong. There's really nothing to fault and a lot to like: it's a big full fat stereo mix, fresh enough to make repeat playing a pleasure, and with something new to find in every song.

The second disc also deserves mention, offering insights into the recording and production process that is in places – and with the help of the copious notes – quite fascinating. The star turn is *Strawberry Fields*



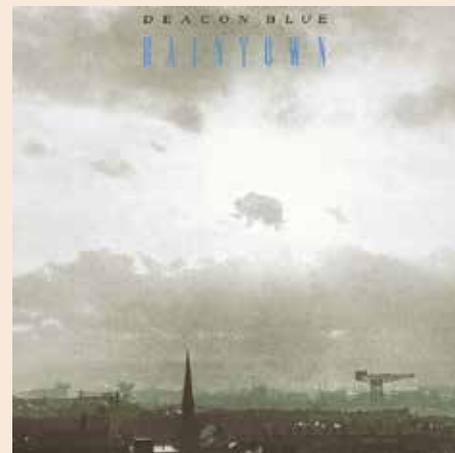
Forever, where you get to hear take 7, then 26 and then the final version where these two – despite being in different keys – are merged together. The new stereo mix is excellent as well, and the same is true for *Penny Lane*. So unless you're completely committed to mono, this remixing of *Sgt Pepper* with the added bonus of *Strawberry Fields* and *Penny Lane* is definitely worth grabbing.

RAY DAVIS

Americana

Sony Music 88875102362

Ray Davis is here writing about America, life on the road and love, with all the skill, biting wit and wordplay you'd expect. The Jayhawks is a fine band in its own right and it fits him like a musical glove. It's a long, long time since I played a Kinks album: play *Americana*, and it's only a few minutes before a chorus comes up and takes you back to a time when you hung on every word. There's the same background vocal that was there 50 years ago, and suddenly you're listening to an album that's both familiar and new. As comfortable as an old pair of shoes, there's the mix of vaudeville, wilful naivety and wit that is so delightfully English; no mid-Atlantic accent here. It's good to remember just how gently touching Ray Davis can be. The spoken introduction to *Rock'n'Roll Cowboys* introduces, illuminates and brings tenderness to the song that follows. That same tenderness informs *A Place In Your Heart*, a gentle song of attraction and travel, where Karen Groberg sings alternate lines – it's a lovely song that demands very little of the listener and gives with simple



straightforward words and emotions.

That sort of sums up *Americana*, The Jayhawks really is a very fine group of musicians and as they play the songs it's musically great. But the main attraction is Ray Davis and his songs and they're as special as you could hope for and as likely to find a place in your heart as anything else he's written. I will grow to love this more and more.

DEACON BLUE

Raintown

(3xCD + DVD Edition)

Edsel – EDSY 9002

Every now and then a song gets stuck in your head and won't go away. Sometime around 10 years ago *Raintown* got so stuck in mine that in desperation I bought the album just to make it go away. It sort of worked, except that I didn't just play *Raintown*. I listened to the rest of the album too, and fell in love with the whole thing. It was crammed full of songs and choruses that would lodge in the head and suddenly appear in the middle of the supermarket aisle. Let your mind wander for a second, and if you've played *Raintown* in the past couple of weeks one of the songs is just waiting.

It's very 1980s: think that particular drum and bass sound; think 1980s keyboards; think 1980s production; and if there's an unrepresented decade in my record collection, it's the 1980s. First of all the *Raintown* songs are very strong and full of hooks; then there's no getting away from the way his voice works with hers: it borders on magical, and it's easy to hear why they