

NIGEL FINN



FEIST Metals

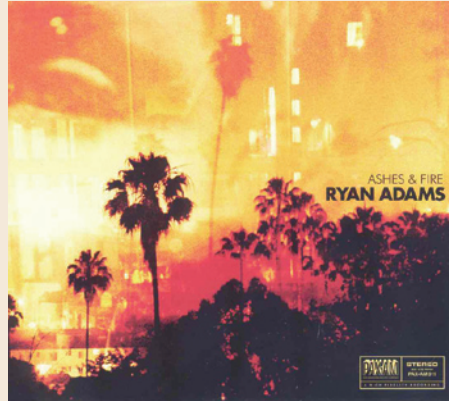
Polydor 2779122

Later with Jules Holland came on the TV, ten o'clock one Tuesday evening, and the first band features a woman called Feist. Tall, a little gawky and angular, she's playing an acoustic guitar with a pickup jammed in the sound hole, and the riff she's playing is just like her – a little gawky and angular. However, it's also irresistible, and so damn catchy and immediate that it lodged itself permanently and instantly in my mind, and I needed to hear it again and again. So it became a matter of some urgency to get hold of *Metals*, the album it comes from.

So I get it, and it goes on as soon as I get home, and, hey, the first song, *The Bad In Each Other*, is the one; the song with the guitar riff that's been circling my head since I first heard it. So for a while that's as far as I go, and I surprise myself at just how many times I can play the same song. There's something about the way she plays; something about the timing and the choice of notes; something about the tone – an acoustic with an electric pickup is neither acoustic nor out-and-out electric.

Feist is a musician I've missed. She can, does and has written a lot of songs with the sort of hooks that the average pop star would kill for. So once I get past playing *The Bad In Each Other*, the rest of *Metals* turns out to pretty much as good: songs about relationships going wrong, bittersweet and regretful. So clever though, like the very best pop music.

Also on vinyl.



RYAN ADAMS Ashes & Fire

Columbia 88697977382

When Ryan Adams gets it right he gets it so right. Right from the opening song, *Dirty Rain*, this is a so right album. That first song and the way it works itself up to the final chorus, the warmth of the organ, the piano, pretty much everything about it is so well crafted and so beautifully played.

Ashes And Fire is Ryan Adams in a reflective mood and full of gentle, melodic and sensitive songs. The band playing is inspired, with special mention going to Norah Jones' at the piano. The production is as good as the skill and craftsmanship the musicians deserve – in other words outstanding. I understand that *Ashes & Fire* was recorded in an all-analogue studio. Whatever, this is a very fine sounding album indeed.

It's so full of good songs it's hard to pull out particular numbers for special mention, but the lazy/perfect groove of *Invisible Riverside* is a delight. Likewise the fragile and soulful *I Love You But I Don't Know What To Say*, where Norah Jones' piano playing is just perfect. It's really hard to come up with a reason for not loving *Ashes & Fire*, which is one of Ryan Adams' best albums yet.



PETER BRUNTNELL Black Mountain U.F.O.

Manhaton HATMAN2027

Peter Bruntnell is one of those artists I assume everyone knows, but sadly suspect that's not the case. He writes great songs and plays fine music, all shot through with a pop sensibility that makes for intelligent and ever so slightly leftfield songs, with big clever hooks that stick in your head for hours afterwards.

Black Mountain U.F.O. has a 1960s feel: harmonies, electric guitar with a delicious twang, reverb on voices, and straightforward drumming. All the time, however, are those lyrics, so clever, and so eccentrically English in their content.

The title track illustrates this almost perfectly, with gently clever lyrics set against everything that makes a twelve-string guitar such a wonderful instrument. It also shows just what can be done in a studio, with Peter Bruntnell playing a twelve string, classical and slide guitar, as well as organ, tambourine and bells.

I guess that the thing that makes *Black Mountain U.F.O.* so comfortable might be my age. It feels like I could have been listening to it at anytime in the late 1960s or early 1970s. It's like discovering a gem from the past that you missed the first time around, and that makes even more sense when I think about the 1960s obsessed friends that introduced me to Peter Bruntnell. *Black Mountain U.F.O.* is easy to listen to and easy to grow fond of.