

(Not so) Secondhand Stars

THE 'NEW NORMAL' HAS FOUND STEVE HARRIS BUYING MORE NEW ALBUMS THAN USUAL, AS SOME OF THE OUTLETS FOR HIS SECONDHAND SEARCHES HAVE BEEN A BIT HARDER TO ACCESS. HERE ARE HIS VIEWS ON HIS LATEST PURCHASES

Three months' notice and I'm late writing these reviews again. No excuse this time like waiting for a particular release, just COVID-related lethargy. It hasn't stopped me buying albums, but mostly new rather than previously loved or abused.

I notice that I suggest using Qobuz or Tidal quite frequently for checking albums out: I wish I did as I recommend – that way I might not buy so many duffers.



BOBBIE GENTRY
The Delta Sweete
[Expanded Edition]

Capitol 00753 90477

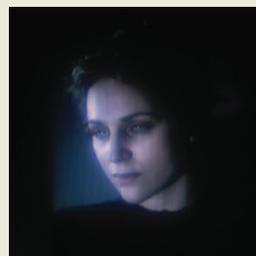
'Tobacco Road' seems a fitting opening track for a singer that sounds as if she has a 60 a day habit. Sounds like a put-down? No: Bobbie Gentry has a distinctive voice and can make a song her own.

My gold vinyl album seems to have been mislabelled with both sides of album one labelled as side A. Unfortunately, I fear that's unlikely to make it worth thousands to collectors in 20 years.

From the perspective of owning an album from a classic artist – and indeed a classic album – it's a good purchase, but somehow I'm not truly enjoying it. It's as if the mastering engineer had a pair of monitors with a hole in the mid response, and so he midrange is pushed quite hard. Yes, it helps intelligibility, but it's not the sort of balance to allows you to sit back and relax.

The demo of 'Feelin' Good', the last track on side three, is a touch sibilant but electrifying, but this is also a lousy pressing – another record going back. Mislabelled is one thing; exceedingly noisy is another.

I may come back to this album once it has been replaced just in case the pressing has significantly affected the sound quality



AGNES OBEL
Myopia
Blue Note 483
7175

Danish singer and musician Agnes Obel lives and

works in Berlin; she is signed to Deutsche Grammophon who co-operate with Blue Note to release her albums in the USA. My copy, purchased from Amazon UK, was of USA stock originally, I guess.

Agnes' music has been used for many TV series often crime dramas the most notable to me is the excellent *Cardinal*.

The first time I played this, for the first few tracks I didn't get it – but by the time the first side had finished, I was hooked. It's an album that I can easily play over and over again. My blood pressure comes down. The layers in the music just wash over me, and I'm back in the half fully awake/half trance-like state special music takes me to. Ethereal sounds to a background of snowscapes, is what comes into my mind: maybe that's why Agnes' music appears in so many Nordic noirs.

If you haven't experienced Obel's music, then grab a listen using your favourite

streaming service but make sure you have time to relax and let the music do its work. It's not a quick fix.

It's up to you to pick between download or the vinyl. Personally, I prefer the sound of the records, but then they do come with a mid-album break – and thus possibly a trance-break – which the download doesn't.



COURTNEY MARIE ANDREWS
Old Flowers

Old Possum Records FP1741-1

I wish I could remember who I know that suggested this album to me – it's rather good. It makes me wonder how many other great albums are out there where I haven't even heard of the artist, let alone the album.

Doing some quick research indicates this is Courtney's seventh album, and has received five-star reviews from *The Times* and *Rolling Stone*. It's a traditional singer-songwriter album with CMA playing acoustic guitar and piano alongside her vocals. The accompanying musicians are unknown to me, and the recording studio isn't detailed.

However, Bob Ludwig mastered it at Gateway Mastering Studios, with sympathy to its AOR – non-pop – audience. The sound is clean, clear and dynamic, backgrounds silent and the vocal quality excellent.

This is another album well worth searching out on Qobuz or Tidal and potentially buying on vinyl, which has a very special way of handling good voices – and Courtney certainly has one of those.

My favourite track is the last one on side two. 'Ships in the Night', where CMA also plays the Wurlitzer and is accompanied only by Andrew Sarlo on bass – incidentally also the album's producer and main mixer. Well worth buying.