

ALBUM ROUND-UP

Singing Adams
Everybody Friends Now
(Records Records Records)



THOSE of us who mourned the break-up of the Broken Family Band will breathe a sigh of relief that Steven Adams, always the talented one from that band, has picked himself up and put together a new band.

You can try and read something into song titles like *The Old Days* or *Injured Party*, but the overriding impression is that Adams is not living in the past and many of the songs are about moving on and breaking with the past.

Indeed the full-bodied opening track is called *Move On*.

"You should have seen me in the old days" he sings elsewhere with-

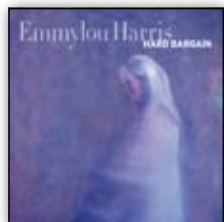
out remorse, rancour or regret.

As a debut this is hugely confident and full of songs that bubble away with delightful hooks and melodies coupled with gifted lyrics.

The production may be sparse but that just plays to the strength of a band clearly destined for great things.

RICHARD HILTON

Emmylou Harris
Hard Bargain (Nonesuch Records)



FORTY years into her career and Emmylou Harris is still prepared to push the musical boundaries — this time by working with new producer Jay Joyce.

Unfortunately Joyce's production values seem designed to smooth everything and give the record label a radio-friendly album, meaning there are rather too many bland ballads to wade through.

All of which is a shame, but even Joyce can't smother both Emmylou's unique voice and the quality of songs like *The Road*, where Harris sings about her relationship with the country legend

Gram Parsons, or the haunting *Goodnight Old World*. There is also the title track, an exceptional cover of a Ron Sexsmith song, and then her touching tribute to a kindred spirit, the late Kate McGarrigle.

Die-hard fans will relish the good moments but sadly she may struggle to win new converts, but after 40 years in the business that's not a bad result.

RICHARD HILTON

Alexi Murdoch
Towards The Sun (City Slang)



LISTENING to British-born singer-songwriter Alexi Murdoch's new album you'd be forgiven for believing in life after death. Why? Because the sumptuous *Towards The Sun* sounds so similar to Nick Drake it's uncanny.

Being so obviously influenced by one seminal artist is generally considered "a bad thing" by music critics, but with songs this good Murdoch has nothing to worry about.

The title track breezes past, the vocals beautifully tired and warm, while the familial *Some Day Soon* eases the album forward with its subtle bluegrass tones.

On the rest of the album's seven tracks, Murdoch is accompanied by guitar, piano and the occasional subdued brass instrument. That most of the album was recorded in one night in Vancouver only increases the respect for Murdoch.

Assured and intimate, *Towards The Sun* is a musical treat for the coming summer months.

IAN SINCLAIR

Moon Duo
Mazes (Souterrain Transmissions)



COMPRISING Wooden Shijps guitarist Ripley Johnson and his partner Sanae Yamada, Moon Duo's first longplayer is an intense aural experience. Partly recorded in Berlin, *Mazes* is defiantly a US rock album, supposedly influenced by the mythology of the road.

The record certainly has a pounding momentum all of its own. Fans of the darker side of Primal Scream will be impressed by the elongated space jam *Seer*, while the title track is a fiendishly catchy number with Johnson mumbling over a droning organ about, well I don't know, but it sounds amazing.

The mucky fingerprints of classic groups like The Rolling Stones and Velvet Underground are all over the record.

However this is far from a simple nostalgia trip. Rather the fuzzy and dense guitar riffs of *When You Cut* and the funky *Run Around* sound thoroughly modern and very cool Leftfield and somewhat indulgent, it's an impressive debut.

IAN SINCLAIR

LIVE

Tango that rises from the ashes

MICHAL BONCZA soaks up an on stage onslaught from a Latin American band that defies convention

Astillero
Barbican, London EC2

AS ASTILLERO take their seats in a semicircle, keeping them visually in touch throughout the concert, their informal dress and relaxed manner radiate the feeling of neighbourhood lads just out to entertain.

Big mistake. All impressions of bonhomie and an expectation of hearing "the tango we have known and loved" are shattered instantly as the Astillero six unleash an astonishing barrage of sound. It is truly gob-smacking for an acoustic group to achieve such deluge of sound.

This is tango like you never heard before — raw to the core, painful and yet exhilarating. The traditional sound cadences are magnified a hundred-fold by the drama and passion injected into every note delivered with numbing collective and individual virtuosity.

The audience is literally in shock and it takes it a good couple of seconds to erupt into enthusiastic applause. A bond is established. Time has come for the singer to join the proceedings.

Menacing, assertive and traditionally aloof, he completes the unnerving stage presence. Rarely a band and vocalist

achieve such symbiotic, unison of sound and immaculate phrasing.

"The orchestra's — for that is what tango bands are traditionally called — political organisation is organic," they tell me "our individualities are subservient to the common good."

Capataz ("Foreman") "always surrounded by dead nature" invokes the '70s when the Argentine ruling class turned on its own people."

The intensity of the tango corners the soul, and fear is palpable for we all know we are not out of the woods yet.

Why Astillero — which means shipyard?

"We needed a strong name. It was the shipyard trade unions' fighting spirit that was characteristic of the struggle. United, these unions resisted like nobody else the dictatorship," they state passionately, adding with nostalgia: "besides, there is the association of the port which gave birth to the tango."

On stage the sound onslaught continues. The high-octane energy is imaginatively constructed as a "wall of sound" built with the invention and discipline of Inca-made walls of Cuzco.

The piano, the unorthodoxly handled double bass, the viola, violin and two bando-

neones rupture, assault, blend, and blast the tango rhythm bravely baring the souls of the players, never more so than in the precious few moments of moving melancholy.

"When we play we are sincere," they confide. "We are conscious of our environment and thereby represent the sometimes hard reality of the Buenos Aires we like, but which also pains us.

"To again play tango in Buenos Aires today is an act of resistance against the globalisation and a market-driven economy," they add.

Their rendering of the haunting *Madrid* — a paean to politically forced exile — is gut-wrenching in its admission of humiliation.

"I shall not return and admit... from far away it is easier to lie."

Astillero are not strangers to it themselves, having just been "kept for hours by British immigration officials without a word of explanation, treated like a bunch of illegals despite being official guests of the Royal Northern College of Music."

But northern hospitality soothed the wounds. "The people often bear little resemblance to their governments," they say.

"This is tango like you never heard before — raw to the core"

